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THE PSYCHOLOGY  
OF  
RELIGION



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# The Psychology OF RELIGION

BY

W. B. SELBIE, M.A., D.D.

Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford

Wilde Lecturer in Natural and Comparative Religion



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# OXFORD HANDBOOKS OF THEOLOGY

THIS volume of Dr. Selbie's on *The Psychology of Religion* is intended to be the first of a series to be published by the Clarendon Press for the use of Theological Students and of others who are anxious for wise and sober instruction on questions of Religion and Theology. I am glad that the first volume to be published should be by an author whose name will secure wide interest in his work, and on a subject on which perhaps more than any other at the present time a good deal of bewilderment prevails.

Psychology, and especially Psychology in relation to religion, is a new subject of study, at any rate in its present form. Like most new subjects it makes somewhat extravagant claims, and professes to do a good deal which it does not succeed in accomplishing. It is obviously destitute of any sound scientific principles. It exhibits remarkable variations and innovations which can hardly claim the name of progress, and it causes considerable perplexity and misgivings amongst those who are intimidated by the latest novelty.

Under these circumstances, a wise and sober review of the subject and of its present position by one who can speak with some authority must be of great utility, and I am glad to have been able to include this work in the series.

Amongst other books that are in progress are :

*Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, by Dr. McNeile, Regius Professor of Divinity at Dublin.

*The History of Israel*, by Dr. Burney, which will probably ultimately require four volumes.

A work on *Christian Theology*, large parts of which are written, by myself, which I hope to be able to complete within about a year, and

*The History of Christian Persecution*, by Dr. Watson, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford.

I should like to take this opportunity of stating how much I regret that we shall not now have in our series a work which Dr. Buchanan Gray had promised to write on the *Theology of the Old Testament*. It is one of the many losses to science which resulted from his premature and lamented death.

A. C. GLOUCESTER.



## PREFACE

THIS book contains the substance of two courses of lectures delivered under the Wilde Foundation at Oxford. It is intended chiefly for students of Theology, but the writer is not without hope that it may meet the needs of a wider public. Though many books on the same subject have recently appeared he ventures to think that there is room for another. He has tried to take as wide a survey of the subject as is possible in the present state of our knowledge, and to draw his information and illustrations from the whole field of religious history and experience rather than from Christianity alone. Of the importance of the contribution which Psychology has to make to the study of religion there can be no question, but it is equally important to recognize that the psychological method has some severe limitations and that too much must not be expected of it. It has by no means rendered philosophy of religion superfluous, though it may provide the necessary groundwork and data for such a philosophy.

The writer has to thank the Bishop of Gloucester for his kindness in reading the MSS. and for some valuable suggestions of which he has gladly made use.

W. B. SELBIE.

OXFORD.

*August, 1923.*

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# I

## *THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION.*

To the student of human nature religion is a subject of perennial interest and first-rate importance. From the earliest times until now it has been a most powerful factor in the progress both of the individual and of the race. In all history there is nothing more impressive than the part ✓ played by religious ideas and practices in moulding the thought and conduct of men. However little we may admire some of the forms which religion has assumed, and however doubtful we may be as to their truth, we cannot fail to recognize their practical effectiveness and their intense human interest. The whole social life of men, their pursuits and occupations, their arts and crafts, the rudiments of their science and of their morality, have been closely bound up with religion. As Goethe says, 'Men are only creative in poetry and art as long as they are religious; without religion they are merely imitative, lacking in originality.' What is true of art and poetry is true of every department of human life and activity. In all of them religion has its contribution to make, and its work to do.

It is such considerations as these that give a new significance to the familiar term Natural Religion. Generally speaking, the term has been made to represent the antithesis of supernatural religion, or that interpretation of religion which makes it depend on a supernatural revelation. It would therefore be equivalent to Naturalistic Religion, if such a phrase may be permitted, and would

rule out from religion everything of a spiritual or transcendental order. This of course means eviscerating religion of all its most characteristic contents. Another view of Natural Religion would confine it to those religious ideas and practices which are concerned with the phenomena of external nature apart from any action of human beings or human society. This, however, involves a distinction which has no basis in reality. The very possibility of a religion of nature in the sense indicated depends upon the reaction of the human mind to Nature and is meaningless apart from it. Another view, again, points to Natural Religion as the common element or foundation underlying the various organized religions of mankind, though there is little or no evidence for the existence of any such element.

In this book the word Natural applied to Religion is used just in the same sense as that in which it is used when we speak of Natural Science. The study of comparative religion and of the psychology of religion has made it more than ever evident that religion is something natural to man, and is not imposed upon him by any extraneous authority, art, or device. It belongs to the very constitution of his nature that his reaction to the universe should find expression in forms which we can only call religious. Man is made that way and can do no other if he is to fulfil his proper bent. To say this now is to anticipate what must come later in the course of our investigation. But if it can be substantiated, it will serve to show that the term natural may be used to cover all man's religious ideas and the acts based upon them, so long as they are regarded scientifically, and without hampering bias or preconceptions of any kind. It is then with the study of religious ideas and phenomena generally, whether primitive or advanced, individual or social, that we have to do.

The study of religion has hitherto tended to be either philosophical, historical, or psychological. The Philosophy



of religion is as old as Plato and his forerunners, but the History and Psychology of religion are more modern developments. They are not, however, mutually exclusive. A sound philosophy of religion will find its materials in history and psychology. Our main purpose at present, however, is with the contribution of the psychology of religion to the general study of the subject. It should be remembered always that we are dealing only with one aspect of a very large field of inquiry. As we shall have occasion to see later, the psychology of religion has some severe limitations, and can only carry us a certain way in the direction of a true science of religion. It provides us with our materials and indicates the use that may be made of them. Theology and the philosophy of religion must do the rest.

It may be convenient at this point to attempt to summarize the history of the psychology of religion since it began to be studied in anything like a systematic and scientific fashion. We may premise that the study is still in its infancy and that the air is full of discordant voices. The only point on which the various writers seem to be agreed is in their determination to use the methods and resources of scientific psychology in the investigation of religious phenomena. For the rest the great variations in their methods, aims, and results, are at least a tribute to the real vitality of the subject, and a clear indication of the need for further inquiry. It is of course true that theology has never altogether neglected the psychological method. Augustine and Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, with a host of others, give the lie to any such suggestion. While both in the Old and New Testaments at least the foundations of a psychology of religion are well and truly laid. But until comparatively recent times theological psychology was of a very primitive and unsystematic kind. Each writer was a law unto himself, and

had no sure data to fall back on. With the development and systematization of scientific psychology a new element is introduced, and new tools are made ready to the hand of the student of religion. It speaks well for the vitality of theological studies that there has been no hesitation in entering on the new, vast, and complex field of investigation thus opened up. It was only as late as 1875 that Wundt's first psychological laboratory was opened, and Wundt himself gave a great impetus to the application of psychology to the study of religion by his own contributions to the psychology of early mythological and religious ideas.<sup>1</sup> But it is the Americans who are the real pioneers in the psychology of religion proper. Among the earliest of them is Stanley Hall who first wrote in 1891. He may be regarded as the founder of a school which has rendered invaluable service by its contributions to the psychology of adolescence, with special reference to education both religious and general. He has been followed by a brilliant succession of writers, chief among whom are Leuba, Starbuck, Ames, Coe, Stratton, William James, and Pratt. The salient characteristic of this American school, as it may now be quite justifiably called, is a careful study of the phenomena of religious experience derived mainly from biographies, introspection, and a systematic use of the questionnaire. It has the defects of its qualities being somewhat too prone to generalize from insufficient data and to overlook the fact that the questionnaire method tends to emphasize the abnormal, and to rely too much on an unhealthy type of introspection. Americans are also inclined to lay undue stress on the merely functional and valuational aspect of psychology and to obscure the line of demarkation between psychology and philosophy. There is some truth in Wundt's criticism of James that his *Varieties of Religious Experience* is not

<sup>1</sup> *Völkerpsychologie*, 2. Band, *Mythus und Religion*, Leipzig, 1906.

psychology at all, but rather an extract from a pragmatic philosophy of religion. American writers generally, however, follow Wundt in reading life always in terms of a struggle for existence, and in judging religion by the way in which it helps or hinders in that struggle. These faults, however, are mainly those of method, and natural to pioneers, and the Americans deserve every credit for the enthusiasm with which they have thrown themselves into the work, and for the valuable results they have achieved so far.

Not the least of these has been the impartation of a fresh stimulus to the study of the psychology of religion in Germany. There the ground had been well prepared by many writers since Schleiermacher's day, especially by those who had paid much attention to various mystic and pietistic forms of Christianity. But it was not until the publication of a German translation of James's *Varieties* by Wobbermin in 1907 that the psychology of religion came to play its full part in theological discipline. Two years earlier Troeltsch had written his *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft*, and this was followed by the founding of the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* under the editorship of Bresler and Vorbrodt. Since this time general theology in Germany has been deeply tinged with psychology, as witness the work of Bousset, Gunkel, Wienel, and others. In 1911 Mandel published his *Genetische Religionspsychologie*. He is a rigorous disciple of Wundt's genetic method in the theological field, and seeks an experimental foundation for the natural religions of mankind. He was followed by Wobbermin in 1913 with his *Die Religionspsychologische Methode in Religionswissenschaft und Theologie*. This writer has perhaps done more than any other to give a psychological interpretation to Dogmatic. The influence of this is seen in comparatively orthodox writers on doctrine such as Schlatter and Lemme.

During the last ten or fifteen years the number of books and articles on religious psychology that have appeared in Germany is extraordinary, and it is quite impossible to speak of them here in any detail. Mention should be made, however, of the work of Stählin in connexion with the *Gesellschaft für Religionspsychologie*, and its organ the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*. Of German writers on the subject it may be said in general terms that they are all more or less under the influence of the school of Wundt. Though physiological and anthropological considerations tend to predominate in their minds, they are by no means blind to spiritual issues, and they make good use of the history of Christian experience, as well as of the comparative study of religions. Their aims also are largely practical, and they have gone even further than the Americans in the application of psychology to the great business of religious education.<sup>1</sup>

There is an interesting school of Sociological Psychology in France which has had considerable reactions on the study of the psychology of religion. Its chief representatives are Durkheim and his fellow workers in connexion with the *Année Sociologique*, but with him and his theory we shall have to do later in another connexion. A very different type of psychology of religion is represented by Vinet, Frommel, Secrétan, and the Malans, father and son. These have been followed recently by Henri Bois, whose book *La valeur de l'expérience religieuse* has had considerable influence, and who, through his numerous pupils at Montauban, no less than twenty-seven of whom have written on the subject, has founded something like a school of religious psychology.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Further details will be found in Wilhelm Koepp's *Einführung in das Studium der Religionspsychologie*, Tübingen, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. an interesting account of this school in the *Archiv für Rel. Psych.*, 1921, p. 207.

In England the psychology of religion has received less systematic treatment, but its effects have been very widely felt.<sup>1</sup> It is more than sixty years since Archbishop Temple declared that nothing could prevent the rise of a new Theology 'based on psychology instead of logic', and ever since that time the effort to ground theology in the religious consciousness, or experience, rather than in the bloodless categories of metaphysics, has been the distinguishing mark of much of the best theological work in this country. Recently this tendency has received a great, if rather one-sided impetus, from the rise of what is called the New Psychology. Though only as yet in a rudimentary stage, this New Psychology, with its implications in psycho-analysis and psychotherapy, has taken a firm hold of the popular imagination. The emotional conditions set up by the war and its sequelae have greatly contributed to this end, and the results for theology and the interpretation of religious experience are becoming very serious, if not altogether mischievous. We shall have occasion to refer to this more in detail later on in the course of our inquiry, but something must be said here by way of introduction and in order to clear the ground.

The New Psychology is described by Professor Tansley, one of its leading British exponents, in the following terms:

'The New Psychology looks upon the human mind as a highly evolved organism, intimately adapted as regards its most fundamental traits to the needs of its possessor, built up and elaborated during a long course of evolution in constant relation to those needs, but often showing the most striking want of adaptation and adjustment to the

<sup>1</sup> Recently, however, a number of books have appeared dealing with the relation of the psychology of religion to Christianity, e.g. *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, by R. H. Thouless (1923); *Psychology and the Christian Life*, by T. W. Pym (1922); *Christianity and Psychology*, by F. R. Barry (1923); and *The Psychology of Christian Life and Behaviour*, by W. S. Bruce (1923).



rapidly developed and rapidly changing demands of modern civilized life. Its most fundamental activities are non-rational and largely unconscious activities. The power of conscious reasoning is a later development, playing but a minor part, even in the most highly developed human being, on the surface, so to speak, of the firmly built edifice of instincts, emotions, and desires, which form the main structure of the mental organism. In many cases the apparent importance of rational activity is seen to be illusory, forming, as it were, a mere cloak for the action of deep seated instincts and desires. The New Psychology obtains its material from the whole field of mental life, normal and abnormal, from external observation and from introspection, from the study of behaviour and conduct,<sup>1</sup> from art, literature and practical life, from mythology and history, from the habits and customs of primitive peoples, and from those of the most advanced civilizations. Already great strides have been made towards a self-consistent and illuminating interpretation of the human mind, and the field of future investigation seems illimitable.’<sup>2</sup>

And again :

‘The modern study of psychopathology, the greatest advances in which we owe to Janet, Freud, and Jung, has brought to light a great mass of data and some fundamentally important conceptions of the highest value to psychology, and these have given the impulse to a new development of psychological theory. The most important general conclusion reached is that the abnormal activities of the mind, as seen in cases of hysteria and insanity, are but extreme and unbalanced developments of characteristics and functions which form integral parts of the normal healthy mind.’<sup>3</sup>

It will thus be seen that the New Psychology claims to cover all the ground occupied by the older types of psychology, whether physiological, functional, or behaviourist, and to approach the subject mainly from the

<sup>1</sup> We are reminded here of Juvenal’s

Quidquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,  
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Psychology*, by A. G. Tansley (1920), pp. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

pathological point of view. It lays chief stress on the action of the unconscious and the abnormal in man's mental make-up, and regards the normal and rational as only secondary. It is thus psychopathology rather than psychology in the strict sense of the term. It claims that the older psychology has overestimated the part played by fully conscious rational processes, and that the balance must be redressed by emphasizing the influence of abnormal or non-rational mental processes. Now no one will deny the immense importance of the study of pathology for physiology, but the one is always subordinate to the other. The study of the body in disease can contribute much to our knowledge of the normal and healthy body, but pathology is not and never can be the whole of physiology. In the same way much light may be thrown on the action of the normal healthy mind by the study of the abnormal and unconscious, but it may easily be overdone. The New Psychology has done good service in recognizing this, but its tendency at present is to exaggerate it to the point almost of absurdity. Psychopathology may throw great light on psychology, but it is certainly no substitute for it, and it is very easy to overestimate its importance. No dispassionate student of writers like Freud and Jung can avoid the conclusion that their close study of pathological mental states has somewhat warped their judgement, and led them to lay undue stress on the irrational and abnormal types of mentality.<sup>1</sup> Their English followers are more inclined to take a sober and less extreme position, but even they seem unduly to depreciate the influence of rational and conscious mental states. One indication of this is to be found in the very important part which the complex plays in their psychology. A complex is defined by Professor Tansley as 'a system of associated mental elements, the stimulation of any one of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*. E. T., 1921.

which tends to call the rest into consciousness through the medium of their common affect'.<sup>1</sup> He continues, 'Complexes are of all sorts and sizes. Some have a basis in inherited instinct common to all human beings: others are individual and depend primarily on education and experience. Some are very sharply defined and circumscribed, their elements being firmly knit together: others are indefinite in outline and loose in construction, shading off into neighbouring complexes.' Again, 'In the creation of complexes the instincts in some form or other are the creative forces, the perceptions are the materials with which instinct works, and the complexes are the resulting mental structures. Once formed a complex limits and determines the modes of expression of the instincts, exactly as the detailed structure of an organism limits and determines the manifestations of life. The importance of the complexes in determining our mental processes and, as a result, our actions is very great.'<sup>2</sup> Tansley then goes on to instance the sex complex, the ego complex, and the herd complex, as being the most important universal complexes by which human action is shaped and whose 'interactions involve all the greater mental conflicts'. Within these, however, a great variety of individual or particular complexes may be found. Now there is no doubt that certain forms of human thought and action may be fitly described in terms of the complex. But the complex itself arises as the result of some conflict, and presupposes a condition which is neither rational nor normal. It may, for example, account for the attitude of the prude, the party politician, or the ardent lover (to quote some of Tansley's instances), or it may determine the action of any

<sup>1</sup> *The New Psychology*, p. 49. For a study of the complex from the medical side cf. *Psychology and Morals*, 1923, by J. A. Hadfield, p. 24 and foll.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 51.

of us under certain conditions of stress. But to claim that 'the whole mental life, and consequently behaviour and conduct, depend primarily on the character and power of the complexes in which the structure of the mind is organized',<sup>1</sup> seems to make the problem of psychology far too easy. Complexes at best represent what is one-sided and abnormal in man's psychological development.

In the application of the new psychology to religion its tendency to over-emphasize the abnormal is seen at its worst. In some of the more ardent disciples of Freud the sex complex is made to dominate everything and is used to explain the origin even of religion. Schroeder, for example, argues that 'all religion in its beginning is a mere misinterpretation of sex ecstasy, and the religion of to-day is only the essentially unchanged evolutionary product of psycho-sexual perversion'.<sup>2</sup> And Swisher says:

'Since the sex-instinct is the strongest of all instincts, the one upon which the perpetuation of the race depends, it is to be expected that religion should be full of idealized sex emotion.' 'It is extremely likely that all religion has a phallic origin. Phallic symbols would naturally be the most comprehensible symbols to the savage mind, and symbols of creation, like creation myths, would naturally take a phallic form. The rites of primitive religion are full of an obvious sex symbolism. The law upon which Jesus founded his gospel, love of God and fellow man, appears late in man's religious development, and then as the obvious and natural outgrowth of primitive sex love. Though this feeling is refined and sublimated in the sophisticated life of civilized man, there is no uncertainty as to its origin, and the fact that the feeling is refined and sublimated does not in the least invalidate the Freudian claim for its sex origin.'<sup>3</sup>

Far-fetched as it may seem, this theory is advanced quite seriously and with a great show of scientific pre-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Am. Journal of Rel. Psych.*, vol. vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Religion and the New Psychology*, by W. S. Swisher, p. 17.

cision. It is supported, too, with abundant evidence from anthropology and the history of religions. This must of course be judged on its merits and without prejudice. All that need be said at present is that while the evidence shows clearly enough the large part which sex has played in many of the religions of the world, it is by no means sufficient to prove the sexual origin of all religion, or even to render such a supposition probable. The advocates of the theory charge their opponents with persistent sex repression. It is a perfectly fair retort to charge them with the possession of a sex complex which perverts their judgement and blinds them to all other considerations.

There is, however, another side to this question, which has been well put by Dr. Stanley Hall, in his treatment of sacred and profane love. After showing how each leads to similar results, both good and bad, he continues :

‘On the other hand their differences are, as the world better knows, many and great. The object of divine love is not sensuous or transitory but spiritual and abiding. Precious as is the love of persons for its own sake, it is a symbol of that which is higher. If up to a certain degree of fervour, varying greatly with individuals, each strengthens and normalizes the other, beyond this point, too great intensity of either interferes with the other. Some may put all the ardour meant for husband and wife, and all the devotion due to children, into the love and service of God and of a future heavenly state, while nothing so emasculates piety as a base and excessive eroticism. Plato, Spinoza and many others have shown that there is an intellectual love of the divine. God, however conceived, whether as incarnate or as a Stoic soul of the world, is an object that appeals to very different sentiments and faculties and in a very different way from those evoked by a human personality.’<sup>1</sup>

One of the first lessons which the student of religion has to learn is as to the danger of finding the origin of religion in any one human instinct or faculty. The

<sup>1</sup> *Adolescence*, p. 300.



religious life and consciousness of man is far too varied and complex a thing to be thus easily explained. It is always wise to remember, as Professor Galloway points out, that 'even the pathological in religion is not due to the presence of non-religious factors, but is the result of the exaggeration or the degeneration of some genuine and abiding feature of spiritual experience. The raptures of the mystic, or the sufferings of the ascetic, are not due to the intrusion of a foreign factor, but are simply the expression of a one-sided development of a normal religious motive. For the normal, though it is seldom realized in practice, is a well-balanced spiritual life.'<sup>1</sup>

At the same time it is only fair to recognize that there is nothing derogatory to religion in the fact that it has had a lowly origin. Like all other human traits it has been subject to development and is to be judged not by its initial but by its final stages and at its highest. If there is any meaning at all in the term natural religion it will imply that religion is closely bound up with the normal operations of human nature. As we shall see later, its origin is not probably to be ascribed to the working of a religious instinct, but rather to the fact that man's primitive instincts work in such a way as to point to a religious interpretation of the universe and of life, and so to give rise to a religious sentiment. Strong instincts like those of fear and sex undoubtedly serve to determine the direction of religious emotions and impulses, and it is one of the differentia of humanity that these instincts should be so used. They are themselves, as it were, merely raw material, and it is the use of them that counts. The fact that religion is capable of sublimating primitive instincts like those of fear and sex shows clearly enough that it is not all compacted of them, but is something sui generis, and therefore able to use them for its own high ends.

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development* (1909), p. 70.

We are now in a position to deal somewhat more definitely with the bearing of psychology on the study of natural religion and particularly with its scope and obvious limitations. Psychology may be defined as the study of mental processes and of the behaviour based upon them, or, in the more exact terms of Professor James Ward, 'Psychology we can define as the science of individual experience—understanding by experience not merely, nor primarily, cognition, but also and above all conative activity or behaviour.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the material which psychology uses is rightly derived from the whole field of human experience or behaviour, and the task of scientific psychology is the humble one of observation and description. It is not concerned to explain mental processes and their working except in so far as explanation is involved in description. To conclude, for example, that mind can be explained by body, that every mental process is simply a physiological process—in other words, to make psychology necessarily issue in materialism—is an excursion quite as illegitimate as would be the opposite inference, viz. that psychical processes necessarily point to a spiritual interpretation of human life. These great questions belong to the realm of philosophy and metaphysics, and psychology should confine itself to such a study of the workings of the human mind as will provide materials for ultimate metaphysical judgements. The same caution must be observed in dealing with the psychology of religion. Its task is to investigate the workings of the human mind under the influence of religious ideas and impulses, and to describe and co-ordinate religious phenomena and practices in all their vast variety. It does not aim at any metaphysical or transcendental explanations, though it may provide materials for them. Above all, the student of the psychology of religion must keep an open mind and refuse to

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Principles*, p. 28.

allow himself to be drawn aside by any preconceptions of a philosophical sort. The following warning of William James is particularly timely in this connexion :

‘Certain of our positivists keep chiming to us that, amid the wreck of every other God and idol, one divinity still stands upright—that his name is Scientific Truth, and that he has but one commandment, but that one supreme, saying, *Thou shalt not be a Theist*, for that would be to satisfy thy subjective propensities, and the satisfaction of those is intellectual damnation. These most conscientious gentlemen think they have jumped off their own feet—emancipated their mental operation from the control of their subjective propensities at large and *in toto*. But they are deluded. They have simply chosen from among the entire set of propensities at their command those that were certain to construct, out of the materials given, the leanest, lowest, aridest result—namely the bare molecular world—and they have sacrificed all the rest.’<sup>1</sup>

It must always be admitted that the study of the psychology of religion brings into prominence the subjective element. It is a study of the religious consciousness, and of religious experience. But this does not mean that it resolves all religion into mere subjectivism or makes it the product of auto-suggestion, though the treatment of religion by the new psychology seems often to carry us no further than this. It is sometimes argued that the idea of God is but the outcome of man’s idealizing propensities. He projects himself and his personal qualities upon things in the first instance, and later upon one imagined person whom he calls God. This God takes different aspects according to the standpoint from which He is conceived. As Professor Tansley says,

‘So far God is essentially a social God, a concentrated projection of all the qualities useful to the herd in a supreme personality—the supreme herd leader of humanity, just as the old tribal Gods were tribal leaders. He is the creator of man and the whole of man’s environment. He gives the law to the herd, fights its battles, protects it from harm,

<sup>1</sup> *The Will to Believe*, p. 131.

punishes its evil doers and rewards the righteous. But with the increase of the individual's spiritual autonomy God has another function to perform. The individual demands the right of entering into personal relations with God, no longer through his servants the priests, but directly and intimately. God then becomes the centre of the individual's own struggles towards unification, the repository of his highest hopes, the confidant of his deepest troubles.<sup>1</sup>

Psychology, however, does not exclude the possibility of a genuine intercourse within the sphere of the religious consciousness with some higher power or powers. The psychologist may indeed argue, with some show of justification, that his study of the religious consciousness gives him good ground for assuming the reality of the spiritual world with which it purports to bring men into contact. The assumption is based on much the same grounds as that which leads us to believe in the reality of an external world for whose existence we have no evidence beyond that of our senses. It is the part of wisdom in both cases to trust our faculties until we have clear evidence that they deceive us. Pure subjectivism, in one case or the other, is very difficult to reconcile either with human sanity or a rational interpretation of the universe. This, however, is a philosophical question and must ultimately be decided on philosophical grounds. But it may be claimed for psychology that it helps to provide the materials on which such a decision may be based.

For the student of the psychology of religion the material available is of many kinds and is generally grouped under three heads as follows:

1. First, there is the vast mass of evidence as to the nature and characteristic effects of religion derivable from the biographies or autobiographies of eminent religious professors or saints. Christian literature is amply pro-

<sup>1</sup> *The New Psychology*, p. 137.

vided with material of this kind, but non-Christian religions are by no means altogether without it, and they too must be pressed into the service. Documents such as the confessions of St. Augustine, the lives of St. Francis and St. Teresa, the writings of Boehme, Tauler, Eckhart, and other mystics, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Grace Abounding, the Journals of John Wesley and Amiel, and studies such as that of the life and teaching of the Sadhu recently published by Canon Streeter and Mr. Appasamy are of immense significance in this connexion. But equally relevant for the purpose are lives of Mohammed and of the Buddha, and of various Hindu and Buddhist saints. Taken together these provide materials of the greatest value for a comparative psychology of religion. The kind of use which psychology can make of religious biographies is perhaps seen at its best in a book like William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, the conclusions of which are chiefly based on evidence drawn from these sources. James defends his method as follows: 'If the enquiry be psychological, not religious institutions, but rather religious feelings and religious impulses, must be its subject, and I must confine myself to those more developed subjective phenomena recorded in literature produced by articulate and fully self-conscious men in works of piety and autobiography. Interesting as the arguments and early stages of a subject always are, yet when one seeks earnestly for its full significance one must always look to its more completely evolved and perfect forms. It follows from this that the documents that will most concern us will be those of the men who were most accomplished in the religious life and best able to give an intelligible account of their ideas and motives. These men, of course, are either comparatively modern writers, or else such earlier ones as have become religious classics. The human documents which we shall find most instructive need not then be sought for in the haunts of special erudition—they lie along the beaten highway; and this circumstance, which flows so naturally from the character of our problem, suits admirably also your lecturer's lack of



special theological training. I may take my citations, my sentences and paragraphs of personal confession from books that most of you at some time will have had already in your hands, and yet this will be no detriment to the value of my conclusions.'<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that these words occur in a chapter entitled 'Religion and Neurology', and this title at once suggests the danger of the method indicated, if it is followed too exclusively, and the limitations which it necessarily presents. The material thus provided often belongs to the region of religious psychopathology rather than to the psychology of religion proper, though it is none the less valuable on that account. The subjects of the experiences related are taken somewhat too exclusively from the mystical type of religion, and are to be regarded as exceptional rather than as normal representatives of religious thought and life. Of the value of their experiences and of the records they have given of them there can be no question, but a religious psychology based on such evidence alone will be, to say the least of it, very one-sided. There is a vast amount of other material derived from religious experiences of a more normal and practical kind that must be brought under review before the psychology of religion can be based on reliable data.

2. Secondly, it was the consciousness of this which led other American psychologists to pursue their investigations into religion by the method of the questionnaire which has already been alluded to. The leading exponent of this method, Dr. Starbuck, claims that the psychology of religion is 'a purely inductive study into the phenomena of religion as shown in individual experience'. 'The end in view is not to classify and define the phenomena of Religion, but to see into the laws and processes at work in the spiritual life.'<sup>2</sup> He therefore bases his study of the

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, p. 16.

subject on a careful inquiry into individual experiences conducted by means of the question circular. The method he describes as follows :

‘The questions were framed so as to call out experiences of a certain general character, and, at the same time, to avoid as far as possible biasing the replies. So far did they meet that condition that rarely were the answers written categorically in reply to the special list of questions. The idea was that if the mind of the respondent were awakened along the desired line, what came forth spontaneously would be the most vital and essential elements of his experience. Care was always taken to call out actual facts of experience, and not opinions about certain ideas or doctrines, on the ground that the interpretation of actual experiences would bring us nearer the operation of life forces than a study of massed opinions. The attempt was made to have the material as representative as possible in regard to sex, age, church connexion, and vocation. Of course the questions were unavoidably selective in certain ways—for example, those responded more readily who were more favourably disposed towards the study of religion, and those also who had now, or at some time had had, an actively religious experience. In interpreting results we have constantly to take into account the limits within which the inductions are valid.’<sup>1</sup>

As might be expected, such a method produced a vast mass of material of very varying value. There can be no question that Starbuck made a most discriminating use of it, sifting and tabulating it with the greatest care. But at best the results derived from it can only be regarded as very approximate. It justifies certain broad generalizations as to the religious experiences of certain classes of individuals under certain conditions. But it has always to be remembered that the individuals concerned are not the best judges of their own spiritual pulse and temperature, and that those who are prepared to answer the questions put to them in this way are generally those who are conscious of religious experiences of a somewhat abnormal

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

type. While, therefore, the questionnaire method is perfectly legitimate and, under proper safeguards, may yield some interesting and even valuable results, it yet cannot be regarded as providing a sufficiently broad basis for a psychology of religion, and it may tend to the emphasizing of the exceptional at the expense of the normal. Introspection is never a very safe guide. Starbuck's statistics, too, deal with those whose religion is some form of Christianity, and for a general psychology of religion a much wider field of investigation is necessary.

3.

This brings us then to the third class of materials of which the student of religious psychology can avail himself and the use of which is absolutely necessary if the whole field is to be covered. It consists of a careful study, classification, and comparison of religious ideas, customs, and cultus, as these are contained in the worship, habits, and folk-lore of primitive peoples and the literary records of all the great religions of the world. Here history, anthropology, and comparative religion are involved, and the material available covers the whole religious life of mankind. All sacred books, all mythologies and theologies, and all cultus rules and practices have to come under our purview. The use we make of this material, however, will be different from that of the anthropologist or historian. Our concern is with the psychological background or foundation of religious ideas and phenomena. We have not to do with their truth or falsehood, or with their sociological reactions except in so far as these serve to throw light upon them, but rather with the subjective conditions which give rise to them. It is sometimes objected to this last-mentioned method of inquiry that it is not strictly psychological at all. History and anthropology follow a purely objective method and look at the phenomena they are concerned with from the outside, while psychology deals with consciousness or subjective experi-

ence. The reply to this has been anticipated already. Religious history and religious literature can supply materials for psychological investigation. And the materials so furnished, the spontaneous outpourings of the religious spirit in cultus, hymns, prayers, and devotional literature generally, will be more useful to the psychologist, because representing a more normal expression of religion, even than lives of saints or the results of individual introspection. The psychology of religion therefore must press into the service all these various types of religious life, thought, and action, before it can claim to be in any true sense of the word scientific.

Of the relation of the psychology of religion to theology and the philosophy of religion various views have been taken. Ames, for example, goes so far as almost to identify it with them. He says: ✓

‘It does not merely prepare the way for theology, but in its most elementary inquiries it is already dealing with essentials of theology and the philosophy of religion. On the other hand the philosophy of religion in its most ultimate problems and refined developments does not transcend the principles of psychology. The idea of God, for example, which is the central conception of theology, is subject to the same laws of the mental life as are all other ideas, and there is but one science of psychology applicable to it.’<sup>1</sup>

Pratt, on the other hand, strongly combats this view as pragmatic, and argues that though psychology deals with our ideas and is therefore mainly subjective in its reference, it does not absorb all that is objective in religion. He goes on to state his own opinion that

‘The psychology of religion must take a much humbler position than that which some of its devotees desire for it. It must content itself with a description of human experience, while recognizing that there may well be spheres of reality to which these experiences refer and with which they are possibly connected, which yet cannot be investi-

<sup>1</sup> Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, p. 27.

gated by science. From this less ambitious view of its task, however, one must not conclude that the psychology of religion is either valueless as an end or useless as a means. Sharing in the limitation of science it shares also in its values. If religion is worth a tenth part of what its believers claim for it, it is worth cultivating as a human possession ; and if it is to be wisely and fruitfully cultivated it should be carefully and scientifically studied.’<sup>1</sup>

This balanced view may be set over against the extreme claims made for the psychology of religion, whether by those who contend that it is the scientific saviour of religion, a substitute for metaphysics and a last word on the subject, or by those who argue that it reduces all religion to mere subjectivism, and eviscerates the spiritual world of all real content. When confined to its own proper sphere, viz. the religious consciousness or experience, individual or collective, the psychology of religion is of the utmost value to theology and philosophy, and at least provides material which helps to confirm belief in the reality of a spiritual order. Even William James in the conclusion of his lectures makes the following striking admission :

‘Disregarding the over-beliefs and confining ourselves to what is common and generic, we have in the *fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come*, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, *is literally and objectively true as far as it goes*.’<sup>2</sup>

Even in its ordinary manifestations religion involves the depths of human personality and is concerned with the highest realities which can be conceived. It is always dynamic, and the power which it exercises is independent of the truth or falsehood of the forms in which it is expressed. Simple and uneducated people derive undoubted help, comfort, and stimulus from religious ideas and practices which most of us to-day would at once rule out

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 515.



as false or superstitious. But our criticism does not affect the fundamental psychical facts. Religious ideas and experiences are inextricably mingled with the ideas and experiences of ordinary everyday life, and are therefore necessarily coloured and conditioned by them. It is one of the tasks of the psychology of religion to distinguish the religious dynamic under all the various forms through which it operates. The sense of or craving for a relationship with the divine, and the consciousness of a transcending happiness are not confined to the higher walks of the religious life, and the psychologist will therefore always be careful to maintain the distinction between the psychical tendencies underlying all manifestations of religion and the particular forms and practices in which they find expression.

It remains now to indicate without discussing in any great detail the practical use and bearing of the psychological interpretation of religion. Without unduly anticipating what must come later in our inquiry, we may say, in the first place, that the psychology of religion makes possible a new and deeper appreciation of the intimate part played by religion in man's make-up and development. As we have already seen, in the light of psychology the term natural religion takes to itself an entirely new meaning. The stigma once attaching to the term naturalism in this connexion is removed, and natural is no longer simply the opposite of supernatural. It rather implies that religion is now to be regarded as natural to man, an essential element in his being. It is his distinguishing characteristic to react to the universe in a religious way. The instincts and tendencies which find their ultimate expression in religious ideas and practices, however crudely set forth, are known to be universal and are therefore to be regarded as rooted in man's nature as such. We can therefore no longer see in religion something

imposed on man by interested parties, priests, medicine men, or even by the pressure of social needs and the herd instinct. It belongs to his most intimate self. Religious ideas and feelings, and the hopes and fears based upon them are a necessary and characteristic element in the education of the human race. There are good psychological reasons for Augustine's dictum, 'that man is made for God and that his heart is restless until it finds Him'. Modern practical psychologists, recognizing that religion is natural to man in the sense we have indicated, are beginning to lay much stress on the danger of the repression of religion and the atrophy of the religious emotions. They argue that religion is necessary to a wholesome and well-balanced life, and that, lacking it, men lack something which is intimately bound up with their well-being. So in the practice of psychotherapy religion is coming to take a very important place as one of the chief agents in obtaining for the sick in mind and body, poise and peace. Dr. Hadfield, e.g., writes :

'Speaking as a student of psychotherapy, who, as such has no concern with theology, I am convinced that the Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences that we possess for producing that harmony and  
→ peace of mind and that confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power to a large proportion of nervous patients. In some cases I have attempted to cure nervous patients with suggestions of quietness and confidence but without success until I have linked those suggestions on to that faith in the power of God which is the substance of the Christian's confidence and hope. Then the patient has become strong.'<sup>1</sup>

Such a result would hardly be possible, nor could such  
? methods be defended, apart from the existence of a religious nature in man prepared to respond to suggestions of the kind indicated. The psychology of religion at once justifies such an interpretation of human nature, and

<sup>1</sup> Article in *The Spirit*, edited by Canon Streeter, 1919, p. 113.

serves to indicate the right conditions and methods of such an appeal.

In the second place the psychology of religion has a practical value in connexion with religious apologetic and religious propaganda. There can hardly be a stronger justification for religion than that derived from its power to produce in man a sane and normal physical condition. Möbius, e.g., says :

‘The consciousness of being within the hand of Providence, the confident hope of future righteousness and redemption, is a support to the believer in his work, his care and his need, for which unbelief has no compensation. If we consider the effect of irreligion in increasing our helplessness to resist the storms of life its relation to nervousness cannot be doubted.’

And Dubois insists that

‘Religious faith would be the best preventative against the maladies of the soul and the most powerful means of curing them if it had sufficient life to create true Christian stoicism in its followers.’<sup>1</sup>

In the same way the psychology of religion throws much light on the best means of producing in men and women that religious awakening which is the first step in the process. It has much to say of the relation of group or crowd psychology to the psychology of the individual and of the various conditions and influences which prepare the way for the experience known as conversion. It helps us also to distinguish between the healthy and the morbid in such experiences, and in the parts played by subconscious and conscious influences in the process. It enables us to estimate the power of suggestion and the respective values of the will, the emotions, and the reason in building up the religious life. In these and in many other ways psychology bears witness to the vital and intimate part played by religion in the life of man. Though its function ✓

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Hadfield, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

is simply that of observation and description it cannot quite escape teleology, and carries with it implications as to the end of man's religious development which are of the utmost importance for the philosophy of religion. While it by no means does away with the necessity for a metaphysic it makes it possible for the philosophical theologian to go hand in hand with the scientist and to find in religion not only that which makes sense of a man's universe but is vital to him as a striving and progressive being.

3. Finally, this being so, the psychology of religion is bound to prove a more and more powerful factor in religious education. The psychological study of childhood and adolescence is now sufficiently far advanced to provide fairly reliable data for a theory of religious education. Runze argues that

'The analysis of the soul life of the child offers the clearest insight into the character of the origin of religion. Partly side by side, partly after one another, there develop out of the soul of the child manifold expressions of life, for which complete parallels can be found in the life of primitive races, as in the spontaneous expressions of the soul functions of the adult civilized man.'<sup>1</sup>

Without going so far as to claim any natural affinity for religious ideas in the child mind, we are yet justified in concluding that religion commends itself to children along certain well defined lines, and that these must be understood and followed if religious training is to be successful in ministering to moral and spiritual growth. Further, the psychology of adolescence brings out very plainly the religious impressionability of this period, and serves at once as a guide and warning to those who are concerned with the religious training of youth. At this period the struggle which is so often a feature of the religious life is greatly intensified, and a knowledge of the conditions under which it takes place may do much to ensure its

<sup>1</sup> *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 99.

being brought to a happy issue. But this, as we shall see later, is another story.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text, reference may be made to the following :

McDougall, *Outlines of Psychology*, London, 1923.

Stratton, *The Psychology of the Religious Life*, London, 1918.

Steven, *The Psychology of the Christian Soul*, London, 1911.

King, *The Development of Religion*, New York, 1910.

Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, New York, 1900.

Troeltsch, *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft*, Tübingen, 2nd ed., 1922.



## II

### THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

WITHOUT adding to the many attempts which have been made to define religion we may at least venture so far as to describe it as one of the numerous ways in which man reacts to the universe. If there is anything in common among the various definitions suggested, it is that element in them which points to a consciousness of ideas, phenomena, and relations, all of which imply the existence of another world alongside the world of matter. The study of this religious consciousness,<sup>1</sup> therefore, will involve an investigation into the various implications of the world view from which it arises. Ample materials for such a study are to be found in the history of religions, all of which bear testimony to the deep-rooted character of the natural and spontaneous tendency of the human mind to give a religious interpretation to life. If we are not justified in speaking of a religious instinct, we are at least compelled to recognize that man's primitive instincts, which are the most potent factors in shaping his activities, do tend to give to those activities a religious form.

This becomes at once apparent when we study the earliest known forms of religion among the primitive races of mankind. Anthropologists are now fairly generally agreed that underlying all religions is what they call animism, or belief in a soul substance discoverable not

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially for this subject, *The Religious Consciousness* (1920), by Prof. J. B. Pratt, and *La Religion et la foi* (1922), by H. Délaacroix.

merely in men but in things. As formulated by Professor Tylor this theory of a quasi-material ghost-soul is to be regarded as the typical and almost universal source of religious ideas and practices.<sup>1</sup> It is suggested by the familiar phenomena of sleep, dreams, trance, and death, and the soul is regarded as a vaporous shadowy human image capable of leaving the body to which it belongs and of entering into other bodies or even things. From this it is but a short step to the conception of other souls or spirits, good or evil, inhabiting persons or things. Animism, interpreted in this sense, no doubt accounts for very many of the phenomena of religion both in its primitive and more advanced forms. But it does not cover quite the whole ground, and cannot therefore be regarded as a complete explanation of the earlier forms of man's religion. Dr. Marett, for example, sees in animism, as Tylor expounds it, only a secondary stage in a process whose earlier stages represent certain general and universal ideas which found in animism particular expression. He asks very pertinently:

'How came an animistic colour to be attached to a number of things not primarily or obviously connected with death and the dead? What inherent general character of their own suggested to man's mind the grouping together of the multifarious classes of so-called "spiritual" phenomena as capable of common explanation? Was not this common explanation the outcome of a common regard, a common and yet highly specific feeling or emotion? And is not this feeling related to the ideas wherein it finds, as it were, symbolical expression—as for example, to the animistic idea—as something universal and fixed to something particular and transitory?'<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Marett answers these questions by formulating a doctrine of supernaturalism, or, as he calls it, Animatism, on the basis of the tendency of primitive man to regard

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, chap. xi.

<sup>2</sup> *The Threshold of Religion*, p. 9.

with wonder, awe, fear, or admiration, whatever is mysterious or not readily explicable. He notes also the impulse to objectify, personify, and propitiate this mysterious something, and he sees in such tendencies and → impulses an elemental trait in human nature which is both logically and chronologically prior to the stage at which a soul or ghost life is attributed to things. Such a theory is not, of course, opposed to animism. It rather includes it in a wider survey of the facts.

From the point of view of psychology the important thing to note here is the fact that man's reaction to the universe takes the form indicated. Our knowledge of primitive man, so called, is no doubt very imperfect and contains a large speculative element. We have no right → to argue about Congo pygmies or Australian bushmen as though they represented the earliest childhood of the race. In dealing with savage peoples we must always allow for the possibility of degeneration. Runze says:<sup>1</sup> 'John Stuart Mill had already pointed out that the life of the savage carries more the mark of degeneration than of primitiveness, that especially the moral life of these peoples reveals more the vices of laziness, cowardice, falsity, impurity, cruelty, sensuousness, and self-assertion than those qualities which we regard as the characteristics of original childlikeness and strength.' Even when we find parallels to savage ideas and habits in the burial customs and pictorial representations of prehistoric cave men, we cannot be sure that we have before us the very beginnings of the human story. All that we can say from the evidence which anthropology adduces is that, when we have gone back as far as we can, we find man reacting to his surroundings in the fashion that we call religious. He is not content simply to observe and take things as they come. He does not just yield to his

<sup>1</sup> Runze, *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 96.

circumstances as we may presume animals do. He finds a meaning in them and seeks to adjust himself to them and even overcome them for his good in the ways which early religious practices indicate. It matters nothing that these ways are to us fundamentally false and childish. The point we are concerned with is that man is so constituted that he acts in such and such a way. In other words he cannot help being religious, and the whole vast and terrifying business which we call religion is rooted in a nature which works in this way and can do no other.<sup>1</sup> As we study its various ramifications and forms of expression we may obtain further light on the how and wherefore of it all, but meanwhile, the important thing is the mentality which must express itself thus and thus. We may, if we will, take it for granted that the process, as natural, is also rational. That it not only makes for man's well-being and for the preservation of his kind, but also represents something in the nature of reality. The proof of this, however, has to be sought elsewhere than in psychology which is only concerned with investigating the mental processes out of which it all springs.

Returning, then, to these more primitive expressions of the religious consciousness we have to note certain common and widely spread features which characterize them.

One of the most controverted questions that arises in connexion with primitive religion, and indeed with religion generally, is as to its relation with magic and magical practices. There can be very little doubt that magic takes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Marett: 'Human evolution is a tissue of many interlacing strands, and again, the savage of to-day is no older or earlier than the civilized man, so that typological and historical primitiveness cannot be identified off-hand. At most then it is with the help of psychological and sociological considerations of a general type that a primordial stage of mind and society can be theoretically posited, out of which determinate religion may be shown to have emerged by some sort of subsequent process' (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, viii, p. 247).

us back into the pre-animistic atmosphere when the world was a place of wonder and terror to man, and it concerned him above all things to keep in good relations with the mysterious powers around him. The religion which made him aware of these powers also devised for him certain acts and practices intended to keep him in friendly communion with them. These acts and practices, which we now call magical, constituted the cultus of early religion, and there are forms of cultus in most religions which have retained magical qualities even down to modern times.

It would appear, therefore, that magic and religion have their roots in the same psychological conditions. In most early religions the two are inextricably intermingled and spring from the same *Weltanschauung*, the pan-vitalism and tendency to personalize, that is characteristic of the primitive mind. It is sometimes claimed that they may be distinguished thus: Religion as propitiatory, a means of securing the goodwill of the supreme powers through sacrifice and worship; and Magic as coercive, a means of influencing events by ritual and spell without the aid of divine powers. Such a distinction, however, belongs to a later stage of development and is not discernible in some early religions. For example, Dr. A. H. Gardiner, writing of early Egyptian religion, says:

‘From the Egyptian point of view we may say that there was no such thing as “Religion”: there was only *hiké*, the nearest English equivalent of which is “magical power”.’ ‘Magical actions may, therefore, for our purposes, be defined as those actions which men performed for their own benefit or for the benefit of other living men, and which demanded certain miraculous powers for their performance. Warning must be given against two misconceptions: in the first place it must be clearly understood that the gods and the dead may, as indeed they usually do, enter into the *dramatis personae* of the magical rite. The principle of division is not *de quibus* but *cui bono*: in the second place, magic as thus defined did not differ essentially in its mechanism from the cults of the dead and of



the gods, nor was it necessarily regarded with feelings of moral reprobation.' <sup>1</sup>

The fact remains, however, that in spite of their similarity in origin, magic and religion have greatly diverged in the course of time, until the separation between them has become complete. Magic is now, and for a long time has been, regarded with some moral reprobation. If it comes under the head of religion at all it is religion of an illicit and degrading kind. One of the problems that confronts the student is as to why religion has increased and magic has decreased. On the general subject of the interpretation of magic and its relations with religion, anthropologists are by no means agreed. Tylor regards it as a pseudo-science—sheer delusion and superstition. Frazer also regards it as a quasi-science, in fundamental opposition to religion. He thinks that 'in the evolution of thought, magic, as representing a lower intellectual stratum, has probably everywhere preceded religion', and that religion grew up where magic failed.<sup>2</sup> In other words, magic was an attempt to exert mechanical control of events and things, implying a theory of mechanical causation, while religion is based on the assumption that nature and human life are controlled by superior powers. As we have already seen, however, this distinction is neither necessary nor universal. It is still, however, maintained by Leuba in the form that magic involves the control of hidden powers, while religion involves the persuasion of psychic beings.<sup>3</sup> Jevons, however, argues that 'first religion and magic had different origins and were always essentially distinct from one another: next that the belief in the supernatural was prior to the belief in magic, and that the

Frazer

<sup>1</sup> Art. on 'Egyptian Magic', *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, viii, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed., i, p. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *A Psychological Study of Religion*, part 2.

latter, whenever it sprang up, was a degradation or relapse in the evolution of religion'.<sup>1</sup> Other writers like Hubert and Mauss, King and Durkheim argue that though religion and magic have their roots in common, magic is an individual, unsocial, or even anti-social trafficking with the same powers which religion employs for definitely social ends.<sup>2</sup> As Durkheim puts it: 'There is no Church of Magic.' 'The magician has a clientele and not a Church.' 'Religion, on the other hand, is inseparable from the idea of a Church.'<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, then, we may agree that all magico-religious phenomena may be classed under one general heading, and that in the course of religious evolution magic came to be assigned an inferior place. As time went on it developed definitely anti-social tendencies and was regarded as an anti-religious influence. This again opens up an interesting problem for psychology. Without attempting any simple and easy solution we may at least note the fact that the difference in the development of magic and religion suggests a warning against overestimating the part played by the instinctive and emotional in man's evolution. It is characteristic of man to transcend his instincts. His reason is never altogether at their mercy, and as a rational being he recognizes ends and values which they can be made to serve. Among these he exercises a certain power of determination for social and other ends. If, then, among the ideas and practices of primitive religion some came to be regarded as positive and good, and others as negative and evil, the fact points to the exercise of a more or less conscious power of discrimination. No doubt considerations of social well-being were an important factor in the

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. McDougall: 'The religious attitude is always that of submission, the magical attitude that of self-assertion' (*Social Psychol.*, p. 306).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Durkheim, *Elementary forms of Religious Life*, pp. 44, 45; and Hubert and Mauss, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie'.

choice, but they were not the only ones. As knowledge advanced, the world view on which magic depends came to be discredited, and all such rites relegated to the region of superstition, though the use of such a term is meaningless when applied to them in their earlier stages. It could only be justified in the light of a better understanding of the universe made possible by intellectual progress. But how slow this process of discrimination is, and how close the links which still unite religion and magic may be seen in the survival of magical processes in the religion of to-day, and in such phenomena as the recent revival of belief in charms and mascots produced by the emotional reaction of the Great War. Under the stress of so great a catastrophe human nature sought relief just as it did long ago against those mysterious forces from whose assaults it found itself so ill-protected.

We turn now to another set of ideas which belong to the earliest stages of religion and also represent the common ground underlying both religion and magic. Anthropologists have given to these the generic name Mana which is the Melanesian term for that impersonal all-pervading power on whose actions and favours human well-being depends. The belief in such power is very widespread among primitive peoples, and it is known by a great variety of names, e.g. Orenda, Wakonda, and Manitu among North American tribes, Hasina in Madagascar, and Baraka in North Africa. These all have their special shades of meaning, but the general idea they denote is that of a power inhabiting things and capable of being imparted to and used by man. Men are successful in love, hunting, war, and agriculture, because they have Mana, and it is the special possession of spirits. Further, as Dr. Marett says : 'There is a widespread tendency on the part of the peoples of the lower culture to isolate in thought and

invest with a more or less independent being of its own the power whereby a holy person or thing proves his or its holiness by means of action supremely efficacious, whether for good or evil. Modern anthropology lays great stress on this notion of the savage (whether it be conceived or expressed by him with full explicitness or not) because it appears to stand for something which lies at the very centre of what he feels, thinks, and does in regard to the supernatural and unseen.<sup>1</sup>

Here again, then, the point of interest for psychology is the fact that men interpret their relations with the universe in such terms. The fact seems to be quite incompatible with Durkheim's view that nature as such does not inspire religious emotion. Rather is it the case that man in the lower stages of his development tends to read nature in religious terms and to ascribe to natural phenomena powers greater than those with which he is himself endowed. The form in which this is done may be determined by the necessities of his group or social life, but the thing itself belongs to the very nature of man. Again, we have to admit that man is made in this way and can do no other. The earliest expressions of his religious consciousness witness to the fact that it is his distinguishing characteristic so to express himself.

There are many other religious ideas and customs which point in the same direction—e. g. totemism, tabu, fetishism, and myth-making. The widespread practice among primitive peoples of adopting some animal, bird, or plant as the symbol and patron of the family or clan points to man's consciousness of his close relation with, or dependence upon, the natural world. The totem animal is a blood relative and its life is therefore sacred. It may, however, be killed and eaten ceremonially, or sacramentally, and in this way the eater is enabled to share its qualities. Totems and totem cults are infinite in their variety, but all point to

<sup>1</sup> Art. on 'Mana', *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, viii, p. 378.

the idea of Mana possessed by the totem, and through it made available for the clan. As Jevons says :

‘As the totem animal becomes a member of the human clan, so the human clansman becomes a member of the animal’s clan.’

Again,

‘The totem became a permanent friendly power : in a word it became a god, whereas all other spirits remained evil, or at any rate hostile powers, by whom a man could only expect to be treated as he was treated by, and indeed as he himself treated members of a strange clan.’<sup>1</sup>

Tabu, again, is closely connected with the totem idea, and arises from the fear of the mysterious power inherent in things possessing Mana. *Tabu* It belongs to the magico-religious region, and is but another illustration of the consciousness of being in contact with mysterious and incalculable powers. That a man should have dealings with these powers is necessary to his well-being, but also involves risks. Tabu is his way of minimizing the risks involved. By some anthropologists it is regarded as wholly sociological in its origin, and as becoming religious at a later stage. But all such chronological distinctions are very doubtful. There is nothing logical or precise about the working of the primitive mind. Its whole outlook is vague and indeterminate, and sanctions and prohibitions emerge as occasion offers. That tabus have a real social and hygienic effect is clearly recognized, as also that they underlie later ideas as to holiness and sanctity. Their psychological interest, however, is our concern for the moment, and that lies in their suggestion of power or psychic energy possessed by certain things, the dangers of which are recognized and have to be guarded against. Whatever possesses Mana becomes tabu and must not be profanely used.

A similar illustration of this method of interpreting the

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 102, 103.



fetish

outer world is found in the fetish. This was originally a West African term derived from the Portuguese *feitico* (*factitius*)<sup>1</sup> and was used of any inanimate object supposed to be possessed by (Mana) power or spirit. It is also used of manufactured objects into which the medicine man could infuse such power or spirit for the benefit of his clients. The power might be either for good or evil, but a very general use of fetishes was to strengthen and sustain, to impart Mana to their possessors.

'The heathen armed with his fetish feels strong. He believes in it: has faith that it will help him. He can see it and feel it. He goes on his errand inspired with confidence of success'.<sup>2</sup>

The fetishistic idea is common to many religions at different stages of their development, and embraces objects of all kinds from the Churinga of the early Australians to the blessed ikon of the modern Russian peasant. It carries with it again the familiar conception of a mysterious and supernatural power inhabiting things, and under given circumstances available for the weal or woe of man. Fetishism is regarded by some anthropologists as a degenerate form of animism, or magic of a very low kind. But it still retains some of the qualities and uses of religion. One of the most recent writers on the subject, after describing the depraved, superstitious, and obscene rites which characterize the fetishism of Tropical Africa, yet goes so far as to conclude that the worship of fetishes contains 'an element of good, the usefulness of which is undeniable both as a factor in the upward trend of the negro race, and as a ground of appeal in directing the race to nobler, truer, and better things'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name was first used by De Brosses in his book *Du Culte des Dieux fétiches*, 1760. He was of course mistaken in his theory that all religion arose out of fetishism.

<sup>2</sup> Nassau, *Fetishism in W. Africa*, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> G. C. Claridge, *The Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa*.

A similar view point is seen in connexion with myths which arise at a more conscious stage of religious development, and are the literary expression of the belief in the action of supernatural powers. Runze defines as follows : ' Mythology is a theory of world and man, which differs from philosophy only by its more picture-like mode of presentation and uses poetic personifying language. The experiences of life gained and the knowledge of nature acquired are embodied by the cultured, especially the esoteric teachers of the people, the priests, and the poets, in the attractive language of the myth. Partly the more easily to impart higher knowledge, partly (as in the mysteries) to hide from the people the secret meaning not suitable for communication, one chose the picture language of religion, the myth, as the means of representing ones ideas.'<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes myths are explanatory of ritual customs, sometimes they are cosmological and have to do with the origin of the world, of the gods, of man, or of the animal creation ; sometimes again they have an historical basis and purport to explain social institutions, tribal distinctions, or natural phenomena. In all cases, however, they involve a reference to the unseen and mysterious forces with which man has to deal whether as an individual or as a member of a group.

Our general conclusions from this brief survey of the earliest expressions of man's religious consciousness may be summed up in Dr. Marett's words :

' An inductive study of the ideas and customs of savagery will show, firstly, that an awareness of a fundamental aspect of life and of the world, which aspect I shall provisionally term 'supernatural', is so general as to be typical : and secondly, that such an awareness is no less generally bound up with a specific group of vital reactions.'<sup>2</sup>

So far we have been dealing with the most elementary forms of the religious consciousness. Many of them,

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *The Threshold of Religion*, p. 124.

however, we find persisting in later and more developed religions, either as pure survivals, of which religion in its conservatism is very patient, or as customs and cultus adapted to new conditions. We cannot, of course, be sure that any of these forms are really primitive, though the ideas underlying them may be taken for all practical purposes as the irreducible minimum of religion. Without attempting for the moment to define this in exact terms we may say that man's earliest experiences of the universe convince him that things are not what they seem. The world is an extraordinarily interesting place, because in and around him everywhere are hidden and incalculable forces to which he must adjust himself, if he is to live well or even to live at all. The history of this process of adjustment is the history of religion, and we have now to try to distinguish the various psychological factors concerned in it. As we have already seen and shall have occasion to discuss more in detail later, many attempts have been made to find the roots and essence of religion in individual psychical or physical processes—e.g. fear and self-preservation, wonder and curiosity, social and even sexual instincts. There is no doubt that these and many other human traits profoundly influenced the expression and development of the religious consciousness. But to make any one of them its exclusive or even paramount occasion is to yield to that tendency to departmentalize human nature from which modern psychology has at length shaken itself free. Man's conative activity is the expression of his personality as a whole. Feeling, intellect, and will have all their part to play, and at different times one or other of them may predominate. But they cannot be separated into watertight compartments, nor do they function independently. The unit of conscious life is not any one of them but all three in action and moving towards an object. So the basis of religion is not to be found in any one faculty but

in man's mind working as a whole. Religion is the expression of the whole self, and every aspect of consciousness has its contribution to make. Psychologically, therefore, we are concerned with the relation of these various elements of consciousness to each other, and to the whole of which they are the component parts. If we consider them separately it is only that we may the better estimate their relations and the parts which they respectively play.

In the early stages of religion there is no doubt that the part played by feeling<sup>1</sup> or emotion is very important. This is the natural consequence of the fact that life in its more elementary forms is impulsive and instinctive rather than reflective or conative, though these elements are by no means entirely absent. When, however, it is urged that this early religious feeling takes the form of fear pure and simple, the statement must be received with caution. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor* is a theory which seems to solve a good many problems and to explain some familiar phenomena. The trouble is that it proves too much, and like all experiments in quick thinking, is not so satisfactory as it appears. Fear by itself is a purely negative thing, generally paralysing in its effects, and though it may lead to protective and defensive devices, is barren of constructive endeavour. It has also been pointed out by some students of comparative religion that the roots of the divine names among certain peoples signify ideas of light, brightness, and gladness, rather than those of gloom or terror. Quite apart from this, however, it would appear

<sup>1</sup> The term *feeling* covers a psychological condition of some complexity. In its simplest form it is the affective quality (pleasant or unpleasant) which marks all mental processes. When it becomes an emotion it involves ideal and reflective elements, a complex of feelings always tending to some form of activity (conative). As sentiment it contains more ideational elements and involves a number of emotions which may be called up by the idea round which the sentiment centres. In religion all of these processes are found active.

that religious fear differs from mere animal dread, and that the difference is very significant. Dr. Marett, e.g., says quite frankly that 'of all English words Awe is, I think, the one that expresses the fundamental Religious Feeling most nearly', and he goes on to urge that we must admit 'Wonder, Admiration, Interest, Respect, even Love perhaps to be, no less than Fear, essential constituents of this elemental mood'.<sup>1</sup> All this goes to show that while feeling or emotion plays a great part in this elemental mood, the religious consciousness cannot be reduced to any one of the many elements that compose it. In many forms of religion, e.g., hope is quite as important an element as fear. This again drives us back to a further consideration in more general terms of the place of feeling in religion.

It was that first and greatest of modern theologians, Schleiermacher, who sought to re-interpret religion to the world in terms of feeling. He reacted violently from the deistic rationalism of his day which turned religion into a cold and abstract logic, and removed God from all real touch with man. Schleiermacher used to say that 'One age, as a rule, only knows how to meet the errors of its predecessors by committing another error', and he is himself a witness to the truth of his words. He certainly over-emphasized the element of feeling in religion, making of it a specifically human affect over against and separate from both metaphysics and morals. Religion was essentially contemplative, and the 'contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the infinite, and of all temporal things in and through the eternal'.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere he argues that this immediate consciousness is a feeling of absolute dependence and of dependence on God, God being that on which or on whom we depend. This gives

<sup>1</sup> *The Threshold of Religion*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Schleiermacher on *Religion*, Oman's transl., p. 36.



to religious feeling, again, a special character of its own, and on the face of it, there is not much to choose between a sense of dependence, and a feeling of awe as constituent elements in the religious consciousness. These and many other emotions go to the making of religion. The point we are concerned with is that no one of them by itself is sufficient to account for the facts. Schleiermacher did good service in restoring the balance between them, though he tipped the scale too deeply on the side of feeling. Ever since his time theology has been far more concerned than it was with the emotional elements in religion, and the study of religious experience has taken on quite a new importance. The tendency at present is to overdo it, and to regard it as the special province of psychology to interpret religion from the experiential point of view. Psychology, however, has no particular interest in experience as the expression of emotion. It is concerned rather to distinguish and assign their respective values to the various elements in which the religious consciousness finds expression, the intellectual and conative as well as the affective. And this is the task which still awaits us.

Granted then that feeling has a large place in religion it almost goes without saying that it will be most active in the earlier stages. But the study of the development of cultus makes it equally clear that it continues to operate strongly even when religion has reached a highly reflective stage. The more primitive emotion of awe is found here alongside a well-developed sense of loyalty, and even of personal affection and love, and these feelings have a marked effect in compelling to religious actions of various kinds. Worship, for example, offers a wide field for the exercise of these emotional activities, though the sentiments involved vary considerably with the conceptions entertained of the character and requirements of the object of worship. Here we have a good illustration of the way

in which the affective and reflective elements in the religious consciousness react upon each other. In some primitive peoples, for instance, religious fear finds expression for itself in frequent outbursts of wild panic and in the worship of evil spirits. There are cases, such as certain tribes in Terra del Fuego, where these things contribute the whole of their religion. They are the outcome of their scanty and miserable lives and inhospitable surroundings. There is probably good reason for regarding them as examples of arrested religious development. Generally speaking, however, these primitive religious emotions take a more positive turn, and the very fear of the gods or spirits produces trust and hope. The emotional element is still to the fore, and finds characteristic expression in wild orgies of dancing and feasting, and the various ceremonies accompanying initiation, marriage, and death. But these are much more than crude expressions of terror. So far as they have any religious meaning or intention they aim at propitiating the powers concerned, and at setting the man and his family or tribe in right relations with them. Consciously or unconsciously the primitive mind exercised a certain discrimination among its deities and evolved systems of worship which point to very definite forms of belief. From this it is but a short step to the choice of the best means of securing the favour of the gods, and to the stereotyping of these in custom. The sanctity with which religious customs come to be invested, and the high place given to traditional ideas and practices, even in highly developed religious systems, all point to the strength of the original emotional complex. The feeling of reverence which comes to be attached to sacred places, things, and persons is one of the most powerful factors in the religious life.

Most religions have at some time or other lent themselves to violent outbreaks of emotionalism. Among

primitive peoples these are probably physical and frequently psychopathic in origin. They are marked by states of ecstasy often induced by intoxicants, by unbridled licence, and by orgies of cruelty and lust. They are not, however, altogether irrational. They observe times and seasons, they often involve an ingenious system of mimicry, and they have a definite bearing on the relation of the people with its Gods and on securing the favour or averting the wrath of the latter. At the same time they serve as a kind of safety valve for the wild emotions which the ordinary tribal life tends to curb and restrain. That it should be so generally customary to give a religious sanction to this process of letting off steam is a most interesting example of early religious usage. How tenacious it is may be seen from the fact that emotional outbreaks or revivals are of frequent occurrence in the higher religions, especially when, for any reason, the emotional expression of religion has been repressed. This is clearly seen in some cases of syncretism where a decadent or stereotyped religion has admitted the emotional rites and practices of an alien faith. Professor Galloway, e.g., points out that the Dionysiac rites were not indigenous in Greece, but were an Asiatic cult which provided an outlet for the powerful emotions common both to savage and civilized men. Thoroughly alien to the Hellenic temper they became softened and humanized under its influence; but they fulfilled a function for which the ordinary cults of Greece provided little scope. In the same way he instances the introduction of the worship of Cybele and the cult of Isis with other Asiatic forms of religion into the Roman world in the days of the Republic. 'One reason—not of course the only reason—for the success of these cults, was the outlet they afforded for collective excitement and the discharge of the feelings, an emotional need not satisfied by what has been termed "a sober but uninspiring

faith".<sup>1</sup> The same phenomenon may be noted at different periods of the history of Christianity when strongly emotional revivals took place at times when religious life was at a comparatively low ebb, and when the emotional expression of religion had been repressed or neglected. The outbreak of Montanism in the second century is a good instance of this. It was marked by a revival of prophesying and an exaggerated form of ecstasy amounting almost to possession. It represents a reaction against an ordered and intellectualized Christianity, and a return to a more impulsive and undisciplined form of faith. Much the same may be said of more modern religious revivals like those under Jonathan Edwards in America and John Wesley in this country, and what Huxley called the Corybantic Christianity of the earlier years of the Salvation Army. In all these cases there was a marked recrudescence of emotionalism accompanied by very violent physical excitement. Making all allowance for the personal magnetism of the revivalists and the influence of crowd contagion, &c., we may yet see in all revival movements of this kind a definite recoil from the dry intellectual and barren type of religion to one in which the warmer feelings are allowed full scope. That they involve an excess of such feeling goes without saying. As we shall see later in another connexion they are very dangerous to a stable form of faith and lead to a reaction which is apt to have disastrous results. But the frequency of their occurrence under certain given conditions witnesses clearly enough to the place which feeling plays in man's religious consciousness. Repressed it will out, and the way that it finds for itself among civilized men often recalls some of the crudest and most violent forms of primitive religious practice. There is, therefore, every justification for those who contend that all forms of worship, cultus, &c., should allow

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *Principles of Religious Development*, pp. 114, 115.

for the definite expression of religious emotion if they are really to satisfy men's needs.

Turning now to some of the less familiar and more specialized forms under which religious feeling manifests itself, we have to note in the first place the remarkable phenomena presented by various types of mysticism. *mysticism* At its simplest mysticism means the consciousness of direct and immediate communion with Deity. This is held to be at least a possibility in many forms of religion, and the term mystical is generally confined to those in which it takes a central place and is regarded as the *sine qua non* of the religion concerned. From the point of view of psychology this is the only form of Mysticism with which we need deal, but it must be remembered that the term is also used to cover a theologico-metaphysical doctrine of the possible union of the soul with the absolute, and even of absorption in the absolute. In certain forms of mysticism it is very difficult to draw the line between this metaphysical doctrine, involving a 'mystic way' of communion with the absolute, and that immediate experience or transcendental consciousness which characterizes mystical religion. Both elements have to be taken into account in any complete study of mysticism, though for psychology interest centres in the experimental side. Again, in dealing with religious mysticism we have to draw a distinction between its milder and more intense forms. There is, as we have already seen, a mystical element in most religions where the religious consciousness has reached a certain stage of development. The longing for union with God, and the more or less vivid sense of His presence in and with the believer is a familiar type of experience which may rightly be termed mystical. The term, however, is often used more definitely of experiences which are psychopathic rather than merely emotional, involving ecstatic conditions in which the soul



becomes lost in Deity and absorption rather than communion is the end aimed at. These conditions are no necessary result of mystical experience. They represent its pathology and must be used and studied accordingly. But it is not always possible to maintain a clear line of division between the milder and more intense forms of mysticism.

Professor James, who treats mysticism altogether from the outside and as one who has known nothing analogous to it in his own experience, suggests four marks or characteristics by which those states of consciousness which are entitled to be called mystical may be distinguished. They are (1) Ineffability—the experience is uncommunicable and cannot be imparted or even adequately described to others. It must be felt in order to be known. (2) Noetic quality—the mystic state is one of illumination or revelation. It is insight rather than knowledge, inarticulate but very real. (3) Transiency—the state is evanescent, illusive, and never continuing in one stay. (4) Passivity—though the state may be induced by various means once the mystic consciousness has supervened, the subject loses his will power and remains a passive instrument in other hands.<sup>1</sup> The worth and meaning of these distinctions will become clearer as we examine the phenomena of mysticism in various forms of religion.

It is generally agreed that certain rudiments of the mystical attitude are discoverable in many primitive cults, as in the consciousness of the need of communion with the mysterious spiritual powers and of the possibility of such communion for individuals under certain conditions. The Shamanism of the Ural-Altaic tribes is a commonly quoted instance in point. The Shaman is a priest or medicine man who is credited with the power of direct intercourse with the spirits. Through certain rites he becomes

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, pp. 380, 381.

possessed by the spirits and is able to use their powers for the benefit of others. He knows the secrets of the spirits and can enlist their services or avert their wrath by virtue of his intimate relations with them. He is regularly consecrated to the office through initiation and other methods, which produce a kind of auto-hypnotism, trance, or alternate personality. Shamanism, however, is only a specialized form of a practice common to many polytheistic and polydemonistic peoples among whom direct intercourse with spirits induced by various ritualistic means gives to the individual concerned supernatural powers.

Turning, then, to more developed types of religion we find, for example, in Hinduism the mystical temper of mind manifested in a vast variety of forms ranging from pure Shamanism and magic to the loftiest heights of philosophical contemplation. The Hindu mind is obsessed with the desire to escape from selfhood and to find union with the ultimate One. It looks always towards the possibility of union or identification between the spirit of man and the spirit of the Universe. Even in the Vedic period there is a mystical and pantheistic setting of primitive mythological conceptions which becomes the seed-bed of the later more metaphysical mysticism. In the Upanishads which, according to Professor Royce, 'contain already essentially the whole story of the mystic faith' we have, on the one hand, a highly speculative type of metaphysical doctrine which culminates in the finding of the changeless one, the self, the incomprehensible as the reality of all that is, and on the other hand a truly mystical reaching out after union with this ultimate which is the goal of peace and silence.<sup>1</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'Man was not delivered from passion and unrest by doing but by knowing. His slavery was a slavery to ignorance : not indeed to ignorance in general, but ignorance of this great supreme fact, hidden from him by a thick veil until he becomes illumined, that his own soul, his *ātman*, his real self, is not distinct from but is identical with, the universal soul, the

deeply emotional craving after ultimate unity finds practical expression in the Bhakti school among whose adherents Bhakti, or loving faith, is the means by which the worshipper and the object of his worship are brought into the desired union. Bhakti mysticism, however, has its sensuous and even erotic side. At times it results both in hysteria and sensuality. A more genuinely religious type of thought is found in the mysticism of modern Bhakti like Ramananda and Tulsi Das in the north of India, Tukaram in the west, and the Saiva saints of the south. The note of all these is the desire to draw near to God and to find Him through a personal inward experience. The soul seeks God like a child his mother, or rests in Him like a fish in the ocean. There are various ways by which the union may be attained. Among them are incarnations, gurus, and sacramental meals. These must be distinguished from the ascetic methods of tapas and yoga, physical practices which belong to a debased mysticism not far removed from magic.

An interesting example of the persistence of the mystical standpoint is to be found in the religion of Judaism. There we have a system of external legalism which seems almost to exclude the warmer and more intimate relations between the soul and God which mysticism presupposes. Nevertheless the mystical attitude is clearly indicated in the prophetic consciousness of a direct inspiration and of a mission based on an immediate communication from God. Many of the psalms, too, give expression to a craving for God's presence and to the sense of joy produced by converse with Him which have the authentic mystical note. Philo's doctrine of the Logos and the δυνάμεις has behind it a deep sense of the chasm between the infinite and the finite and of the need to bridge it in order that man and God may be

Brahman. Then he is at rest' (Geden, *Studies in the Religions of the East*, p. 282).

at one. The medieval Kabbalistic system and its modern developments represent a philosophical cosmology deeply tinged with the mystical spirit, while in many Jewish poets and theologians strong expression is given to the spiritual love of God and to the rapturous desire of the soul for greater knowledge and closer communion with Him. In all this we may see a spontaneous uprising of the instinct or passion for God which bears witness to its strength and originality.<sup>1</sup>

The Dean of St. Paul's enumerates four great characteristics of mysticism as follows : (1) Esoteric knowledge ; (2) Quietism ; (3) Introspection ; (4) Contempt and neglect of material things.<sup>2</sup> Traces of all these are to be found in many religions, notably in certain forms of Buddhism and in the Taoism of China, but it is in Christianity, and perhaps in Christianity alone, that they reach their full development. The great Christian mystics, whether of the medieval, the Protestant, or the Roman church, present a psychological problem of the utmost interest and importance. They illustrate at every turn the need to distinguish between the mysticism of the milder and saner type and that which is of a purely ecstatic and psychopathic description. Without prejudging the vexed question as to the place of mysticism in the religious experience of St. Paul we need have no hesitation in accepting the fact. In his expression of his experience we have all the mystic longing for union with the Divine, and in his reference to visions and revelations of the Lord, and to a condition, 'whether in a body or out of the body I know not', we realize how narrow at times was the line which separated him from the psychopathic. We find also in St. Paul other common features of the mystical attitude such as the withdrawing of attention from the activities and interests of this world

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Abelson, *Jewish Mysticism*, London, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*.

or of ordinary life, and the concentration of attention on one object—in his case the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian mysticism, however, has certain marked characteristics of its own. It has been distinguished from oriental mysticism as a mind filling from a mind emptying process. Though this distinction cannot always be maintained there is no doubt that the content of the Christian revelation and the character of the Christian God tend to produce, even in the mystic, certain active virtues such as are not always found in other types of mysticism. The combination of the mystic and the man of action to which Lord Rosebery points as the secret of the power of the Puritans is a characteristically Christian product. But at the same time there are Christian mystics who show no traces of such a combination, but in whom the purely contemplative life is supreme. Hymns like those with the refrain 'Oh to be nothing, nothing', show how the desire for absorption of the self may exist even in modern Christian experience.

In all types of mysticism the underlying psychological processes are practically the same. By attention and auto-suggestion the mind becomes concentrated on its object in such a way as to produce a vivid awareness of its presence, and an assurance of its reality that nothing can shake. Thus Angela of Foligno :

'The eyes of my soul were opened and I saw a certain plenitude in God in which I comprehended all the world . . . and my soul in its exceeding wonder cried out and said, Behold the world is pregnant with God. . . . There was given to my soul a faith most certain, a hope secure and very firm, a security about God so continual that it took away all fear. In this most certain and enclosed good, which I understand with so much darkness I have all my hope.'

We shall return to the subject of mysticism later on and in more detail, but enough has been said to show how amply it illustrates the emotional element in the religious



consciousness. The characteristic attitude of the mystic is one almost of antagonism to any rational or intellectual process. His appeal in the last resort is to his own feeling or intuition, and he needs nothing more. His claim that such feeling is trustworthy may not be without justification, but it must rest in the end on other than purely emotional grounds.

But this attitude is not peculiar to mysticism. The part which feeling plays in the religious consciousness generally points to the giving of a religious direction to that desire for self-realization, or self-affirmation, which is so characteristic of man at all the stages of his development. This has at least as much to do with determining man's religious emotions as the more negative instincts of fear and self-preservation.

### III

#### THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS (*continued*)

WE turn now to the contribution made to the religious consciousness by the thinking or rational element in man. We have seen that the emotional in religion, important as it is, may be and often is exaggerated. Its usefulness depends largely on the degree to which it can be controlled, and among the controlling and co-ordinating powers thought or reason is the most important. The very term religious consciousness implies the activity of thought interpreting and directing the data of experience. This is necessary if sensation or intuition is to become articulate. For man's consciousness of the external world is never a matter of mere sensation or perception. Whether he knows it or not, there is an activity of thought, synthetic or analytic, in the simplest form of consciousness. Apart from it the self would remain involved in itself and there would be no distinction between the self and the world outside. It is the mental activity of the subject that enables him to become aware of the objective world, and this world becomes intelligible to him only by the act of his own intelligence. Further, it is in and through this same activity of thought that the subject becomes aware of himself as over against the objective world. Not until the reflective process begins does self-consciousness become real. Thus in the mental history of the individual the power to put himself, as it were, outside the stream of sensational experience and to pass judgement upon it is all important, and forms a necessary condition of the healthy development of the consciousness.

The history of religion illustrates the working of these laws of thought in a particular sphere. Dr. Edward Caird, in his *Evolution of Religion*,<sup>1</sup> argues that the consciousness of God in some form follows naturally on the consciousness of objects and the consciousness of the self, and that the three forms of consciousness constitute closely connected, and not always separable stages in man's awareness of his relation to the universe. The view of God thus obtained is at first purely objective, and may be no more than that of some power or person before which or before whom man trembles in weakness, fear, or awe. The whole process of religious development illustrates the filling out of the content of this conception as man's understanding grows, and his relations with the universe become more intelligent. The unprogressive character of many primitive religions is due to the weakness in them of the element of thought. Only as they pass from the instinctive to the reflective stage can they free themselves from the influence of custom and tradition and become self-adjusted to man's growing intellectual capacity and needs. The process by which religious thought has developed from the earliest efforts at myth making to elaborate theologies and philosophies of religion is an intricate and many-sided one, and serves to illustrate at every point both the activity and the importance of the rational element in religious knowledge. Even in the earliest and instinctive stages of religious belief thinking is implicit, and has as great a part to play in the healthy development of the religious consciousness as the instincts themselves. A good illustration of this is the place occupied by myth making and mythologies in the growth of religion. As we have already indicated, in myths we see the first groping efforts of the mind to explain and account for some of the familiar

<sup>1</sup> pp. 186 ff.

phenomena of the external world. There is very little that can be called religious about them in their earliest stages. They personify natural objects of all kinds and seek to account for the origin of the world, of man, of social institutions, and even of the gods. Creation myths, for example, vary widely from the more primitive conception of the marriage of sun and moon, or heaven and earth and their consequent universal parentage, to the more strictly theological idea of the marriage of gods. Other stories, however, point to a primeval chaos out of which the cosmos emerges, and others again to one supreme all-father who may be himself the agent in creation, or more commonly entrusts the work to other and lesser beings. The familiar conception of the demiourgos in gnostic philosophy has its counterpart in much less speculative systems. In the Vedic hymns the dim figures of Dyaus and Prithivi, like Nut and Seb in Egyptian folk-lore, point to the prevalence of the idea of a single creative pair. The creation of the human race is visualized in myths like those of Deucalion and Pyrrha, or Pandora and Prometheus. There is a vast cycle of myth-making in connexion with the changes of the seasons and the sowing and gathering of the fruits of the earth (cf. Demeter and Persephone), and many of these are connected with and even originate the sacred ritual proper for such occasions. Others, again, in the form of hero legends explain the origin of tribes or families, while others account for various arts both of war and peace, as well as social customs and institutions. Stories of dragons, demons, monsters, satyrs, kelpies, and the like are connected with extraordinary and uncanny natural phenomena, as witness, Bellerophon and the Chimaera, and innumerable tales of wood and water nymphs, sirens, fairies, and other mysterious beings. All this points to a reflective type of animism showing many points of resemblance in widely separated peoples. It

marks the beginnings of a natural philosophy and a theologizing process which become gradually modified as the mind of man adjusts itself the more successfully to its surroundings.

When we reach that stage of religious development at which ideas concerning the spiritual world are given literary form, the influence of the reflective process becomes much more pronounced. It is not, however, necessarily either uniform or progressive, and very frequently there is a definite hiatus between religious books and the cult or religious practice based upon them. Many sacred books are in no sense the original products of individual minds, or even of groups of individuals. They are often of composite origin containing ancient materials derived from legend, folk-lore, or cultus, worked up for propagandist or ritual purposes. Their authority is not infrequently derived from their supposed appeal to custom, though occasionally some great name of the past is used to authenticate and commend them. All this, however, points to a very definite reflective process, and to an intention to give colour and sanction to ideas and practices which might otherwise have become obsolete. As this process becomes more and more conscious, it inevitably gives rise to attempts to intellectualize religion and to make its essence consist in right knowledge or right thinking. This is exemplified in the history of almost every great religion. Christianity, as it lost its first enthusiasm, became transformed into a metaphysical system. Orthodoxy of belief became of supreme importance, and in the minds of many people to-day Christianity is regarded as a system of doctrines to be assented to rather than as a life to be lived. So other religions, particularly among intelligent peoples, have tended to find expression far too exclusively in terms of thought. Moham-  
medanism was dogmatic from the first. The infidel is the unbeliever who dissents from the right opinions, and the



sects of Islam are due to differences of opinion on minute points of doctrine. Buddhism is a system of teaching, and at the head of the requirements of the eightfold way stands the necessity for right views. But it is in Indian religion that this tendency is seen at its highest. What action is to the Westerner, thought is to the Indian mind, and salvation by right opinion is the goal to which he is urged. Hinduism has shown extraordinary vitality in absorbing many reformers and their teachings, and it remains a system of doctrines with certain ceremonies attached. A modern Indian writer, Har Dyal, goes so far as to say, 'Metaphysic has been the curse of India. It has blighted her history and compassed her ruin. . . . It has condemned the mind of India to run in the same old groove for hundreds of years. It has blinded her seers and led them to mistake phantasms for realities.' This may seem exaggerated, but it represents only too accurately the result of an exclusive devotion to the intellectual side of religion. In Eastern religions it has tended to produce a rationalized form of mysticism the effect of which has often been to remove religion from all contact with reality.

In the West, on the other hand, the over-emphasis on the intellectual presentation of religion in the form of dogma has led to a reaction in favour of a religion of feeling or experience which has also to be condemned on psychological grounds. Ever since the days of Schleiermacher there has been a persistent tendency to minimize the importance of the intellectual element in the religious consciousness in the supposed interests of the purely intuitional. Schleiermacher himself, in his eagerness to deliver religion from the bonds of dogma and traditional creed, and to emphasize the importance of the immediate consciousness of the divine, reduced religion to an emotional mysticism and made heart and head antagonistic rather than co-operative agents. He says: 'From within,

in their original and characteristic form, the emotions of piety must issue. They must be indubitably your own feelings, and not mere stale descriptions of the feelings of others which could at best issue in a wretched imitation. Now the religious ideas which form those systems can and ought to be nothing else than such a description, for religion cannot and will not originate in the pure impulse to know. What we feel and are conscious of in religious emotions is not the nature of things, but their operation upon us. What you may know or believe about the nature of things is far beneath the sphere of religion.' This protest against both the older dogmatism and the newer intellectual idealism, is maintained in an intensified form by Ritschl and his followers, Kaftan, Herrmann, Loofs, Harnack, and others. Differing widely in many other respects these writers agree at least in their repudiation of all metaphysical theology, and in substituting for it a system of value judgements which finds the sole ground of our belief in God to be its influence on the higher life of man. Harnack's *History of Dogma* supplies an interesting illustration of this point of view, and one which greatly commends itself to modern educated minds. It starts from the assumption that the simple religion of Jesus which 'means one thing and one thing only: Eternal life in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God', has been distorted and obscured by the intellectual presentation given to it in various doctrinal systems. So far as this means only that a distinction must be drawn between religion as a personal experience and the systematic statement of the truths which religion presupposes, Harnack is undoubtedly right. But as he elaborates the theme it means very much more. His argument in the long run rests on the assumption that the religious consciousness is possible without thought. It can be reduced to pure feeling and gains nothing from the universalizing and unifying activity of thought. This

is a conclusion which on purely psychological grounds one must refuse to admit. While religion cannot be reduced to thought and is not to be identified with its activity, still less can it exist or make progress without it. Religion is the response of the whole man to that which is external to and higher than himself, and in this response, feeling, thought, and will are all alike concerned. The action of thought on the data of the religious consciousness is necessary before religion can become articulate or intelligible. It is the legitimate task of the historian of religion to discover its 'essence', but that task is not fulfilled simply by reducing any religion to its lowest terms. The real essence of a religion is in its living power of development, and the various forms which this development has assumed and the intellectual expression given to them are as important for the historian as for the philosopher. The interest of psychology in religion can never be confined to the naïve expressions of the religious consciousness or to the experiences based upon them. It is equally concerned with the attempts to give philosophical form, exposition, and justification to these, however remote they may seem from its primitive presentations. Kant was right when he argued that 'when religion seeks to shelter itself behind its sanctity, it justly awakens suspicion against itself and loses its claim to the sincere respect which reason yields only to that which has been able to bear the test of its free and open scrutiny'.

The question at issue is really one of balance and proportion. We are all aware of the evils which follow from an over-emphasis of the emotional elements in the religious consciousness. But over-emphasis on the intellectual is equally productive of mischief, though of mischief of a different kind. To turn religion into theology, to make it a matter of the head rather than of the heart, and to substitute the form for the substance, is to eviscerate

it of all real content.<sup>1</sup> Gnosticism in the early church, and English Deism and German rationalism in more modern times, afford abundant illustrations of the paralysing effect produced by a purely intellectualized presentation of religion. It is at least a matter of regret and productive of much confusion that religion should so often be presented to men as a body of truth rather than a life. It can only be the one as and because it is the other, and one of the merits of a psychological treatment of religion is that it shows that in any acceptable presentment of it both elements must be preserved. This is the more needful because intellectual statements of religious truth tend, under various influences, to become stereotyped, and inordinate claims are often made on their behalf. When they persist in the face of advancing knowledge and spiritual experience they become hindrances to the truth rather than its safeguards. Religious doctrines, therefore, need to be continually refreshed and revived by contact with experience and life. It is one of the functions of thought in religion to revise and restate the intellectual inheritance of each generation in terms suited to their needs.

As Höffding says:<sup>2</sup>

‘The spirit of Protestantism demands that the door to the free investigation of religious experience, its basis and its results, shall always remain open. Its traditions and examples must be subjected to an historical and critical inquiry: psychology must examine whether its constituent experiences are natural and immediate: logic has to investigate the consistency of its postulates: while it is for

<sup>1</sup> ‘Brahmanism is an illustration how, on the one hand, the thinking element in the religious consciousness makes for unity, and is restless till it finds a highest reality which shall absorb all differences. But it also shows us that where that entirely dominates the other elements, the personal values of life may suffer violence and the religious relationship be reduced to a fiction’ (Galloway, op. cit., p. 154).

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 130, Eng. trans.

ethics to discuss the integrity of its values. Were this process of testing to be abandoned, we should relapse into barbarism or into spasmodic attempts to hold fast to that which is absurd. The religious consciousness is always inclined to drag about with it traditions which have neither religious, intellectual, nor ethical significance, dead values which no human being can really experience, but which it does not dare to throw away, lest, in their fall, they should tear away something more with them.

This, however, raises the further problem as to how far we have any right to assert on psychological grounds the truth or reality of the objects of religious belief. Granted that the psychology of religion justifies us in finding religion to be natural to man and in giving to it an important place as a factor in human progress, does it enable us to go further and maintain that the religious consciousness which on the experimental side brings a man into touch with life, on the intellectual side brings him into touch with truth? Are we to argue in the rather cynical terms attributed to Ferrier that, 'It is important that philosophy should be true and it is important that it should be reasoned, but it is more important that it should be reasoned than that it should be true'. In other words, is the whole intellectual process which we have been describing a mere mental gymnastic, or is it a way to the truth? While psychology naturally and properly vindicates the part played by the intellect in religion, and insists on its usefulness in purifying our intuitions and selecting among them those which have a right to dominate the mind and heart, it cannot pronounce definitely on the truth or falsehood of religious ideas or on the reality or validity of the objects of religious faith and worship. At the same time the psychology of religion must not be regarded as reducing religion to mere subjectivity. Its proper material is religious experience in all its vast variety, and from this experience it cannot exclude the ideas and theories to which it has given expression, especially if behaviour is to



be regarded as a proper field for psychological investigation. To that extent therefore it provides data for estimating the truth or validity of these ideas and theories, though the final judgement upon them must be reached by other means. It must be recognized that there are certain modern exponents of the psychology of religion who take rather broader ground and claim for it the right to pronounce on the truth and objective reality of the objects of the religious consciousness. Wobbermin, for example, argues that the question of the truth of religion is a proper concern of the psychology of religion, and that the reason why the psychology of religion has been thus far comparatively fruitless is because it has excluded this question from its purview. He urges that the religious consciousness is always deeply concerned about the truth of the ideas with which it deals, and that therefore the truth of these ideas is equally a concern of the psychology of religion.<sup>1</sup> Now to claim that psychology has a legitimate interest in this question of truth is one thing, but to claim that it has the right finally to pronounce judgement upon it is quite another. To the psychologist the interesting point about the religious consciousness is that it carries with it almost invariably a conviction of the truth of religious ideas, and of the real existence of the objects of religious worship. To believe that 'God is and that He is the rewarder of them that seek after Him', is not the prerogative of the adherents of the higher theistic faiths, it belongs equally to the more naïve and primitive type of worshipper. In such belief the conceptual element is the most important, but it does not exclude the imaginative on the one hand, nor, on the other, does it exclude the pragmatic. The history of religion shows clearly that all these

<sup>1</sup> Georg Wobbermin, *Systematische Theologie nach religionspsychologischer Methode*, Leipzig, 1913; and W. Stählin, 'Die Wahrheitsfrage in der Religionspsychologie', in *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 1921.

elements are present in belief, but they depend ultimately on a conviction of reality. If it could be shown that the objects of belief were pure imagination, or subjectively created in order to satisfy some more or less imperious needs, then the belief itself would in time wither away. In all religions that are alive rational thought has played an important role in revising and correcting beliefs, and under its influence ideas of God have been profoundly modified and brought into closer and more logical relations with man's mental growth. It is an elementary axiom of the psychology of conviction that beliefs are formed and held because they satisfy and minister to some deep psychological craving. But in that craving are to be included not merely emotional and conventional needs but intellectual needs as well.<sup>1</sup> Even the pragmatic justification for belief in God which has become so popular of late, cannot stand by itself. As Pratt says :

'Important as is the pragmatic element in the God-idea it is not the only element. And the attempt to prove it such is both bad psychology and bad epistemology. Bad psychology because it neglects altogether certain real elements in the religious consciousness, whether found in philosopher, priest, or humble worshipper—men who through all the ages have meant by 'God' something more than the idea of God, something genuinely transcendent. Bad epistemology because based ultimately upon a viciously subjective view of meaning, a view which would identify our objects with our ideas of our objects, and which, carried to its logical conclusion would result in solipsism.'<sup>2</sup>

We may claim, therefore, for the psychology of religion that it vindicates the place which reason holds in religious belief, and points to the rationality of that religious world view which alone can fully express man's nature and satisfy his needs.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Joseph Jastrow, *The Psychology of Conviction*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 209.

We turn now to the discussion of the place of the will or conation in the religious consciousness. We have already seen that in the psychology of religion account has to be taken of the emotional, intellectual, and volitional elements, which may be taken to represent the mystical, rational, and moral religious types. It is, no doubt, misleading to speak of these separately, for in every experience all three of them are present, and the study of religion shows clearly enough the necessity of preserving a due balance and proportion among them. To maintain this, however, and to estimate the parts which these factors respectively play in the religious consciousness, it is necessary to examine the contribution which they severally make, always with the understanding that they are not separate and distinct but mutually complementary forces. We have seen how the emotional element in religion needs to be directed and interpreted by the intelligence, and how the intellectual element is barren and void apart from the emotional, and we have now to see how the volitional element works on the material thus provided. The whole question of the psychology of volition is still largely *sub iudice*, and the discussions on it are endless. For our purpose, however, there are certain general conclusions which may be accepted as ascertained, and on which we can work. The essential achievement of the volitional process is the holding of an idea in the centre of consciousness by an effort of attention. The process is not, as Wundt and others assert, primarily inhibitive, but involves conation. Volition may therefore be defined with McDougall as 'the supporting of a desire or conation by the co-operation of an impulse excited within the system of the self-regarding sentiment'.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the role of the voluntary element in consciousness may be studied in such books as Jules Payot's *The Education of the Will* and Ribot's *Maladies de la Volonté*, but it is only with its

<sup>1</sup> *Social Psychology*, p. 249.

reactions on religion that we are concerned here. These are, no doubt, closely related to the moral and social organization of the conative dispositions, but they have their own part to play in the development of the religious consciousness.

There is no doubt that in recent years the importance of the volitional and conative elements in religion has been very greatly exaggerated. Will and feeling together have been pitted against intellect, and on this one-sided psychological foundation a new type of philosophy of religion has been founded which shows all the defects of its origin, and provides one more illustration of the need for a due balance and proportion between the various factors in our mental processes. It will be well to deal with the situation thus indicated before we proceed to discuss the volitional element in religion and religious experience.

The earliest attempts to assert the primacy of the will in religion and to exalt it over against the reason were made by the nominalist opponents of Thomas Aquinas. Among these William of Occam so developed his doctrine of the practical reason as to find in it an empirical criterion of truth superior to anything merely speculative or theoretical. In this respect he directly anticipated the work of Kant whose postulates of the practical reason take the place left vacant by the critique of the pure reason. What Kant cannot reach by any process of intellectual reasoning, he discovers as a datum of the moral consciousness, and in so doing makes religion merely a transcendental projection from morals and void of any intellectual content or justification. The dualism between our intellectual faculties and our moral consciousness implied in Kant's teaching was greatly accentuated by his followers, and resulted in various attempts to ground both philosophy and religion not in any metaphysical system, but in the practical requirements of life, 'Was fruchtbar ist, allein ist wahr.' Conspicuous

among these attempts are the pragmatism of Professor James and the work of the Ritschlian school in Germany, both being distinguished by a very definite antagonism to metaphysics.

Pragmatism is a philosophical method which reduces all beliefs to rules of action, and interprets truth in terms of value, making value for this purpose a category of the will. It relegates intelligence to a secondary position, and thrusts metaphysical questions on one side, regarding any solution of them except the practical one as hopeless. As Professor James says, 'True ideas are those which we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify'. 'To develop a thought meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce: that conduct is for us its sole significance': so 'True is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons'.<sup>1</sup> Applied to religion this method (for it is a method rather than a system of thought) has a certain importance. In the earlier stages of religious belief, at any rate, the application to them of the test of working value is perhaps the best means of ascertaining their truth. Their validity and power of survival depend largely on their capacity to meet the needs of men and to help them to realize their social ends. As Dr. Schiller says, 'Religion is the magic which works'. When it ceases to 'work' even among primitive peoples it is easily discarded. As religion develops too, the pragmatic test retains a very real value. That it should have a worth for life, and issue in conduct and customs which make for man's higher development, may reasonably be expected of it. But one condition of this is that it corresponds with reality, and involves a rational and coherent world view. Even religious ideas that are not true can never be made true by any practical results which may follow from them.

*Pragmatism*

<sup>1</sup> James, *Pragmatism*, pp. 201, 46, and 76.



They can only act as working hypotheses, to be discarded when they no longer serve. The voluntaristic psychology which lies at the basis of pragmatism can make for itself certain quite legitimate claims, but it is at best one-sided and insufficient.

Much the same may be said of the conception of religion involved in the Ritschlian theology :

‘Just as to the pragmatists, the intellectualistic view of truth, that it is the correspondence of thought with reality, is unsatisfying because it is essentially static and gives no scope for the exercise of man’s intellectual activities, so for Ritschl questions of the nature of the soul, of any individual thing and of God and Christ, apart from the energies of the same, have neither interest nor value. Ritschl anticipates the whole modern pragmatic psychological movement in his exaltation of feeling and willing above the intellect’.<sup>1</sup>

This is based ultimately on the contention of Lotze that metaphysics are founded on ethics and that man’s faculty for forming value judgements is in the long run more important than any intellectual world view, and that judgements of fact are of no moment for religion in comparison with judgements of value. Ritschl himself shrank from the subjective idealism which is the logical outcome of this position and particularly from the conclusion reached by some of his followers that the objective existence of God is no real concern of religion. In the first edition of his great work he argued that ‘The acceptance of the idea of God is no practical faith but an act of theoretic knowledge’, though in the third edition with an entire absence of consistency he altered this as follows: ‘The acceptance of the idea of God is practical faith and not an act of theoretic knowledge’.<sup>2</sup> On Ritschl’s terms, however, there is no escape from subjectivism. God becomes no more than a postulate of man’s experience and religion has nothing to do with the world of objective facts. All our judgements

<sup>1</sup> Mozley, *Ritschlianism*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Justification and Reconciliation*, 1st ed., p. 192, 3rd ed., p. 214.

on moral and religious subjects are 'independent judgements of value', their only relevance is 'for us and for the satisfaction of our needs'. Now in all this Ritschl was making a valuable protest against both the dogmatism and rationalism of previous religious philosophies.<sup>1</sup> But the stress he laid on the merely volitional element in religion was overdone, and he was compelled to bring in considerations of reason by methods which, from his own point of view, were illegitimate. The fact that he asserted the existence of God shows that he was able by some process of intellectual legerdemain known only to himself to turn judgements of value into judgements of fact. His psychology was really at fault. It is impossible to isolate the will as a factor in human experience. Apart from reason the will is blind. Mere conation without direction, end and aim comes to nothing, and only in the harmonious and balanced working of reason, feeling, and will can we find a true explanation of human thought and life.

Putting aside, then, these familiar attempts to account for religious experience in terms of purely voluntaristic psychology, let us go on to inquire further as to the function of the will in man's religious activity. This brings up for consideration the whole conative aspect of religion as seen in cultus, worship, and all forms of voluntary religious activity. We have already seen how religious emotion, feeling, or experience only becomes articulate and effective as it obtains intellectual and practical expression. Belief and emotion work together to produce ritual in which each acts and re-acts upon the other. All that a man feels and thinks is bound to work itself out in some form of activity, and in religion this takes the form which

<sup>1</sup> He says, 'The elementary conception of the spiritual life as a real thing is only a preparation for man to recognize the peculiar reality of the spirit in the functions of feeling, knowing, and willing, but especially in the last named' (*Theologie und Metaphysik*, p. 48).

we call ritual, cult, or worship. Not the least important element in this is its voluntary direction towards a certain end, and the more self-conscious and ideational a religion becomes the more explicit is this process. A good example of this is found in the initiation ceremonies characteristic of most religions through which young men and women voluntarily undergo almost incredible hardships in order to put themselves right not merely with the social order to which they belong, but with the power, or powers on whose goodwill both social and individual well-being depends. And the very act of carrying out the religious rites and ceremonies proper to the occasion has the effect of arousing and strengthening the appropriate religious feelings. Apart from the rites in which religious feeling is at once aroused and finds expression it would be difficult if not impossible to maintain it. So in more developed forms of religion belief is both engendered and strengthened by acts of worship and service. As ideas are translated into acts they obtain new power, and the constant repetition of these acts has the effect of articulating and making real the ideas on which they are supposed to be based.

The same point is illustrated again by the whole history of idolatry in the nature religions. The chief use of images and representations of gods is not merely to enable the worshipper to visualize them, but rather by giving something concrete on which to fix his attention, to convince him of the reality of that which lies behind the outward and visible form. The same may be said of all efforts to make a religious appeal through the senses by means of physical objects. They represent a sound psychological principle, and both among civilized and primitive peoples are a real aid to devotion. In some cases no doubt this is because the physical act or form is supposed to represent the god, as in the case of the

Chinese who found it impossible to pray 'unless there was a god in the room'. But in other cases it may be quite definitely understood that the image is not the god or that the picture is not his likeness, and yet either of them may help to concentrate the will in such fashion as to produce a definitely helpful and worshipful attitude. This is one of the recognized uses of cultus in all religions. Thus, at the end of his most interesting study of the development and place of image worship in Hinduism,<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. H. Farquhar says,

'Idolatry brought to the Hindu people something which their philosophy never gave them, and never could give them, present and accessible Gods. Brahman, being "beyond thought and speech", can never be to any man what an idol is. It is the God to whom a man can turn in prayer at any moment and receive the help or the answer he wants that will finally hold the human heart. It is thus evident that idolatry ministers to some of the most powerful and valuable of our religious instincts. That is the reason why it has laid such hold of the heart of the Hindu people. That is the reason why it has played such a great part in the religious history of our race. Every nation that rose to great power and influence in the ancient world bowed down to idols. We have only to think of Babylon and Egypt, those mighty peoples whose science and art lie behind all the progress of the West, of Greece, the homeland of culture, and of Rome, the practical and sober minded mistress of the world, to realize how completely the ancient world was under the sway of image worship. Even Persia for long content with fire as a symbol of the divine, sent idols of Mithra throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. If further proof is wanted of the part idolatry has played in human life, let us recollect that to it we are indebted for architecture, sculpture, and painting.'

This is not, of course, in any sense an apology for image worship, but it does show the psychological importance of externals and their appeal to the religious sense. At almost all stages of religious development they seem to be

<sup>1</sup> *The Crown of Hinduism*, ch. 8, p. 341.

necessary in order to stimulate activity and arouse devotion. The danger of over-emphasizing this aspect of the religious consciousness, however, is obvious. The feelings and ideas which we call religious naturally tend to work themselves out in action, but equally naturally the action tends to become an end in itself, and religion to grow merely mechanical. The outward and visible signs may easily end by failing to stimulate faith and devotion and become substitutes for them.

Another illustration of the effect of the volitional and conative elements in religion is to be found in the action of symbolism whether of word or deed. In religion as elsewhere symbolism covers a very wide field, and offers a peculiarly favourable occasion for the working of the social consciousness or group mind. Both feeling and belief are strengthened and stimulated by the performance of symbolic acts and the utterance of symbolic words, but especially when this can be done in company with others who are like minded. The singing of hymns and the recitation in unison of creeds or statements of faith has a profound psychological affect, and it is always intensified when carried out in a participating crowd. It has often been pointed out that all that seems to be necessary in this connexion is that the action shall have a religious aim, and that the circumstances shall be such as to suggest such an aim to those who take part in it. Here antiquity, tradition, and custom have their work to do. It seems hardly to be necessary that the words repeated or sung should even be understood. The mere repetition of the time-honoured sounds in company with others, and in some hallowed place of worship is enough to create and renew the springs of religious devotion. As the author of *The Diary of a Church Goer* says:

‘The words are quite familiar to us. We supply the sentences beforehand as the reader proceeds. Yet it has



happened—one knows not how—it will doubtless happen again—one cannot tell when—that, as the verses follow one another, suddenly out of the well-known story there comes a strange thrilling sense of heights and depths never before scaled or plumbed. Something in the air, something in ourselves, something, it may be, in the voice of the reader, on sunny mornings, in country churches, when the scents and sounds of summer come through open windows, in the equable atmosphere of some vast minster, when the words spoken at the lectern are encompassed with stillness—under all varying circumstances, defying calculation and explanation—the new comes out of the old, the passion out of the common place, and we say within ourselves, this thing is of God.<sup>1</sup>

This is as psychologically true as it is beautifully said, and if such experiences are possible in the familiar worship of a modern Christian church, much more will they be possible among more unsophisticated folk where the repetition of the customary forms carries with it an almost magical power. The same is true of every form of symbolism. Actions, signs, postures, vestments bearing a definite religious significance are all able to produce in men the attention, feeling, and attitude which constitute worship. They must, however, bear this significance, and the feeling of it must be shared by others before the effect can be produced. The symbols and ceremonies of one religion will be quite meaningless to the devotees of another. They may excite curiosity, but never reverence or worship. The Cross will be a stumbling-block to the heathen, just as his idols are a stumbling-block to us.

But it is in the deliberate use of these external forms in order to produce religious emotion that the action of the volitional element in religion is most clearly seen. It is not only that mass action has a marked effect upon the will, but that the will to perform certain rites or actions under due conditions will produce a renewal of belief in that

<sup>1</sup> p. 213.

which the rites or actions symbolize. This is part of the regular stock in trade of the medicine man in all ages. It has been used with effect in religious propaganda and education. In the higher forms of religion it represents a principle of the utmost value. This finds expression in the fourth Gospel in the memorable words, 'He that → willeth to do His will shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself'. Here, however, the whole process is sublimated. Doing the will is not ritual observance but ethical and spiritual obedience. But if ritual observance duly carried out can produce → belief, much more will this be the case with a voluntary obedience to an ethical and religious ideal. At the same time it must be recognized that emphasis on the volitional element in religion leads ultimately to a legalizing of religious practice, and to the predominance of the ceremonial over the spiritual. That way no progress lies. As Galloway says:

'Psychologically the religion of the externally directed will is a one-sided expression of human character and suffers the doom of all that is abstract and partial. It ceases to satisfy the spiritual nature of man, and like Mysticism and Rationalism has to make way for some more complete embodiment of the religious life.'

That complete embodiment, we may repeat, can only be attained when all the elements in the religious consciousness, emotional, intellectual, and volitional are present each in their due proportion.

'The individual who enters on the religious life as a member of a religious society, has to advance to the full development of that life in action that he may rise to the fullness of spiritual personality. Neither by vision nor contemplation can the soul attain to the possession of its religious birthright, and faith only lives and thrives by being acted out.'

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

Caird, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, Glasgow, 1891.

Hebert, *La Forme Idéaliste du Sentiment religieux*, Paris, 1909.

M. Jastrow, *The Study of Religion*, London and New York, 1901.

Payot, *The Education of the Will*, New York, 1909.

Bousset, *What is Religion?* London, 1907.

Stanley Cook, Article on Religion in Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

Hauer, *Die Religionen*, Stuttgart, 1923.

#### IV

### THE UNCONSCIOUS IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

As we have already seen, one of the most characteristic features of the so-called New Psychology is the stress laid on the hypothesis of a subconscious or unconscious mind or self. These terms are used in a great variety of senses, and while psychologists are fairly agreed as to the phenomena which point to the existence of such an unconscious region of consciousness, if the paradox may be permitted, they are by no means agreed as to the explanation of it or as to the part it plays in the conscious life. Many of the phenomena are undoubtedly psychopathic, and their relation to normal psychology is by no means easy to determine. But it seems to be taken for granted that, whether normal or abnormal, the contents of the subconscious mind form a very important element in the religious consciousness, and therefore must be regarded as a factor to be reckoned with in the psychology of religion.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, before we leave the general question of the religious consciousness, it will be necessary that we inquire into the origin, meaning, and bearing of the theory of the unconsciousness mind, and then consider its relation to religious life and experience. Before we do this, however, it is only fair to recognize the fact that the objective psychological treatment of the subconscious does not command the assent of all who deal with the subject. For example, Sir Henry Jones writes :

'Most of our presuppositions, especially of those pre-

<sup>1</sup> Weingärtner, *Das Unterbewusstsein. Untersuchung über die Verwendbarkeit dieses Begriffes in der Religionspsychologie.*

suppositions which play a decisive part in determining the direction of our lives, are unconsciously entertained and their truth has never been examined. We are as little aware of their presence and of their activity as is the healthy man of his digestive apparatus. Psychologists who speak of consciousness as if it were extended, and refer to it as a "field" have invented "a subconscious region" in which these presuppositions abide and from which they may emerge at times. As a matter of fact there is no such region and there are no such denizens. Consciousness is a *process*, and every process of mind reacts upon the structure and powers of the mind, persists in the results it has produced, and in that form, is carried into and takes part in the present activities of the Ego. Everything that we do not happen to think about at the moment and which has been an element of our previous experience is subconscious in this sense, but the moment it is the object of our attention it ceases to be subconscious.' <sup>1</sup>

The theory itself dates as far back as Sir W. Hamilton's conception of latent mental modifications, and von Hartmann's *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten*, but it is only comparatively recently that it passed over from philosophy into psychology. This was largely due to the work of F. W. H. Myers who set forth a theory of a subliminal self in the following terms :

'The conscious self of each of us, as we should call it—the empirical, the supra-liminal self as I should prefer to call it—does not comprise the whole of consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only so far as regards the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death.' <sup>2</sup>

Myers goes on to explain that this conception does not involve the hypothesis of two selves or two personalities, but one self of which part is supraliminal and part subliminal. His theory was hailed by James as the most

<sup>1</sup> *A Faith that enquires*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Human Personality*, &c., vol. i, p. 12.



conscious or subconscious
 important discovery yet made in psychology, and he further defined it as implying that 'there is not only a consciousness of the ordinary field with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts, and feelings which are extra marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs'. But the matter is not quite so simple as this. There are some psychologists who still resist the assumption of a subconscious part of the mind. They argue that the unconscious antecedents of conscious mental processes are not mental at all, but → purely physiological, and they would deny the use of the term mental to denote anything unconscious. It is not possible, however, to deal with mental and physiological processes quite in this way. That physiological changes underlie all mental processes is no doubt true, but there is no evidence to show that subconscious mental processes are more exclusively physiological than conscious ones. Others, again, like Bleuler, lay stress on the difficulty of drawing any definite border line between the conscious and the unconscious (hence the use by others of terms like co-conscious and the fore-conscious), and of explaining why at any given moment consciousness is distributed over any given portion of the mind's content. Bleuler suggests that possibly psychical processes become conscious by association with our ego. That which is present in the mind, but not directly associated with the ego, is unconsciously present though it may be influencing us all the time. With this we may compare the definition of consciousness given by Bergson as the hyphen between the present and the past. Consciousness, he argues, only emerges when the individual becomes aware of his own mental states, and this allows for a pre-conscious or unconscious stage. Titchener, on the other hand, contends that

mind and consciousness mean the same thing, but that their operation is to be distinguished thus: Mind is the sum total of the mental processes in the life of an individual, while consciousness is the sum total of the mental processes at any given moment, a section of the mind stream. It is possible, for example, to lose consciousness without in any sense losing one's mind. This again would allow for a subconscious element in all mental states. So Ward concludes that 'there are subconscious presentations which may tell on conscious life—as sunshine or mist tells on a landscape or the underlying writing on a palimpsest—although lacking the intensity or the individual distinctness requisite to make them definite features'. We may contrast with all this the position of Dr. Rivers in his recent book, *Instinct and the Unconscious*. Approaching the question chiefly from the medical point of view, and realizing the importance of the unconscious for the understanding and treatment of morbid mental states Dr. Rivers prefers to use the term unconscious in a sense of his own. He gives the following admirable definition of the phenomena of the unconscious mind as ordinarily understood.

'At any given moment we are only clearly conscious of the experience which is in the focus of attention. This forms only an infinitesimal proportion of the experience which is capable, by being brought into the focus of attention, of becoming conscious with an equal degree of clearness. Again, at any one moment a much larger amount of experience is within the region of the conscious though less clearly, but even the largest amount which can thus be brought within the outermost fringe of consciousness at any instant or even within any brief space of time, forms but a very small proportion of that which, with other directions of the attention, could come into the field of consciousness. At any given instant there is a vast body of experience which is not in consciousness because at that instant it is neither the object of attention, nor so connected therewith as to occupy consciousness with more or less clearness at the same time.'

This, however, Dr. Rivers does not include within the term unconscious as he uses it. His use of the term limits it to such experience 'as is not capable of being brought into the field of consciousness by any of the ordinary processes of memory or association, but can only be recalled under certain special conditions such as sleep, hypnotism, the method of free association and certain pathological states'. Dr. Rivers then uses the word unwitting to signify what is generally termed the unconscious, reserving the latter word for those psychopathic states which are inaccessible to the general body of consciousness.

This leads us to the theory of the subconscious which has been propounded by Sigmund Freud. Though largely derived from the observation of morbid conditions this theory is far more than a medical one. It is based on a view of the process of forgetting which Freud was the first to advocate. He regards forgetting as an active process by which unpleasant experiences are relegated to a subconscious region, or driven out of consciousness, and kept there by means of what Freud calls a censorship.

*subconscious*  
 Though the term unconscious is used very loosely by Freudians it generally means a 'realm' where various emotions which have from time to time been repressed, lie hidden. This 'realm' is, as Freud himself says, 'the genuinely real psychic, as completely unknown to us as to its inner nature as is the reality of the outer world, and given to us through the data of consciousness just as incompletely as the outer world is given through the sense organs'.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Freud finds sexual elements predominating in this unconscious realm, and that he and his followers have immensely exaggerated this element in the situation must not blind us to the real value of his contribution to the subject.

When all this has been summed up, however, what else

<sup>1</sup> *Traumdeutung*, p. 381.

does it mean that there are degrees or grades of consciousness, and that our conscious life is constantly influenced by that which has passed from, or been driven from, the conscious field? In the field of consciousness there is a focal point which absorbs attention, and round it is a lower degree of consciousness which becomes fainter the further it is removed from the centre. There is thus what Fechner calls a threshold to consciousness, an intermediate state which we may call the subconscious or the unconscious showing wide differences of presentation, which are not altogether due to variations in attention. It must be remembered of course that these spatial descriptions of consciousness as a field with margins, or a circle with a periphery (James) are mere images or metaphors, conveniences of speech which must not be unduly pressed. It should also be understood that in dealing with the unconscious it is very difficult to say where the normal ends and the abnormal begins. There can be no question as to the importance of the pathological side of this subject, but it must not be allowed to absorb attention too exclusively. Much can be gained from the study of such phenomena as those of dissociation, and dual personality, but these do not provide the only or even the most important evidence for the power of the subconscious element in our experience. If there is any truth in the suggestion of Dr. Stanley Hall that the mind may be compared to an iceberg floating in the ocean with one-eighth of it visible above the water, and seven-eighths hidden below, then it may well be that the influence of the unconscious over our conscious thoughts and acts is greater than we imagine, even though the proportion of seven to one has to be put aside as exaggerated.

Granting then the existence and activity of this unconscious realm, what of its bearing on the religious consciousness? If we are driven to postulate the existence

of an unconscious region in order to explain many phenomena of our conscious life, then we may admit that the study of religious experience provides abundant evidence of the need for some such hypothesis. We must beware, however, of regarding the unconscious as affording a solution of all the problems of religious experience. Still less must we find in it the sole source of such experience. There is no doubt that far too much has been made of it already, and it is responsible for some very mischievous developments in the expression of the religious consciousness in these days. The use made of the 'subconscious mind' in connexion with the Emmanuel Movement and with Christian Science is a case in point, and illustrates the danger of the un-psychological application of psychological ideas. The hypothesis of the unconscious must not be made responsible for all the theological theories that have been built upon it.

While it is no doubt William James who is chiefly responsible for the emphasis now laid on the subconscious mind in religion, he must not be held to account for all the wild applications of his theory by his enthusiastic and indiscriminating disciples. James's own position is as clear as it is cautious and tentative. He says of the unconscious that

→ 'It contains such things as all our momentarily inactive memories, and it harbours the springs of all our obscurely motivated passions, impulses, likes, dislikes, and prejudices. Our intuitions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions, persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-rational operations, come from it. It is the source of our dreams, and apparently they may return to it. In it arise whatever mystical experiences we may have, and our automatisms, sensory or motor: our life in hypnotic and hypnoid conditions: our delusions, fixed ideas, and hysterical accidents, if we are hysteric subjects: our supra-normal cognitions, if such there be, and if we are telepathic subjects. It is also the fountain head of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep in the religious life the door into this region



seems unusually wide open: at any rate experiences making their entrance through that door have had emphatic influence in shaping religious history.'<sup>1</sup>

In another connexion James says :

'Just as our primary wideawake consciousness throws open our sense to the touch of things material, so it is logically conceivable that if there be higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological conditions of their doing so might be our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them. The hubbub of the waking life might close a door, which, in the dreamy subliminal might remain ajar or open.'<sup>2</sup>

This is all very hypothetical, but its implications are clear. It is the unconscious region of the mind that is supposed to be especially subject to religious influences, the channel by which the unseen world becomes open to us. This *olla podrida* of emotions and delusions has religion, too, as one of its ingredients, and by means of it religious experiences become accessible. The real difficulty of any such theory is best seen in the use made of it by those who have little or no psychological knowledge, and therefore do not show the caution which characterizes James. The effect of this is in some quarters to reduce religion to spiritualism, to equate prayer with telepathy, to deal in psychic forces, demonology and magic, and to find in the subconscious mind an individual manifestation of the universal mind—God.

Among the more sober applications to religion of the theory of a subconscious mind especially open to spiritual influences is Dr. Sanday's suggestion that the divine nature of Our Lord Jesus Christ may have had as its seat or locus the subconscious region of His mind. Dr. Sanday approaches the question from the mystical side, and argues that

'The deepest truth of mysticism, and of the states of which

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 483.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

we have been speaking as mystical, belongs not so much to the upper region of consciousness—the region of symptoms, manifestations, effects—as to the lower region of the unconscious'.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Sanday believes that this lower region is fuller, richer, and contains more precious material than the upper. It is a storage and deposit of past thoughts and emotions, and,

→ 'The deposits left by vital experience do not lie together passively side by side, like so many dead bales of cotton or wool, but there is a constant play as it were of electricity passing and repassing between them. In this way are formed all the deeper and more permanent constituents of character and motive. And it is in these same subterranean regions, and by the same vitally reciprocating action, that whatever there is of the divine in the soul of man passes into the roots of his being.'<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, seeing that this lower region of the subliminal consciousness is the proper seat or locus of all divine indwelling in or action on the human soul, it is natural to regard it also as 'the proper seat or locus of the Deity of the Incarnate Christ'. In this very interesting, but highly imaginative exposition, Dr. Sanday lends the weight of his great authority to the theory that the unconscious part of our being is in some way the higher, and therefore the proper seat or channel of divine influences. It is true that Dr. Sanday puts forth his suggestions in a very tentative fashion and with very characteristic modesty, and that he later on admitted that he had probably drawn too sharp a line between the conscious and the unconscious, but that did not modify his main contention or his application of it to the Person of Jesus Christ. With that application we are not here chiefly concerned. It belongs to Christology. But the general conclusion, in which Sanday agrees with James, as to the place and function of the unconscious in

<sup>1</sup> *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

our religious nature must be dealt with on its merits. The first thing to be said is that we have no warrant on psychological grounds for concluding that the unconscious is in any way profounder, higher, or more valuable than the conscious mind. Indeed, on James's own showing, something like the opposite is the case. The unconscious is the repository of very mixed materials. These consist, as it were, of droppings, remnants, memories of our conscious life, and in them good and evil elements are inextricably mixed. We know nothing of any process of selection or purification which goes on beneath the surface. What we do know is that the uprushes from the unconscious are seldom such as suggest that it represents our nobler and diviner selves. Dreams and trance states which belong to the dim region of the psychic life are but too often incoherent and absurd reflections of our conscious states. The real affinities of the subconscious are rather with our primitive instincts and animal nature than with our higher faculties. It would seem that the unconscious presents us with a mass of raw material with which will and intelligence have to deal, and which they can make either 'a savour of life unto life or of death unto death'. To relegate religious experience to the subconscious realm exclusively is to deprive religion both of rationality and of motive power. If man is to respond to the voice of God with any effect he must do so as a conscious, free, and intelligent being.

If, therefore, we put aside as purely speculative and therefore psychologically unsound all attempts to find the special seat of religion in the unconscious, are there any other directions in which we may look for its influence on the religious life? There is no doubt that the unconscious is a storehouse of impressions, and experiences from which the conscious life is unquestionably affected under certain conditions. If the appeal of religion is to be successful it follows that there must be

something in us which is capable of responding to it, and this will often be found, not merely in a nature religiously inclined, but in previous religious ideas and impressions which have been forgotten or repressed. As Bergson says, 'The whole of our past psychical life conditions our present state without being its necessary determinant: while it also reveals itself in our character' In the psychical past of most of us religious ideas and influences have played some part and remain stored up ready to emerge when occasion offers. Most cases of sudden conversion illustrate the power of unconscious religious inclinations. The remembrance of some words of scripture or the verse of a hymn learnt in childhood will recur with new meaning and irresistible power under the stress of religious emotion, and 'chords that were broken will vibrate once more'. Or, as Browning puts it in another connexion :

Just when we're safest, there's a sunset touch,  
A fancy from a flower bell, some one's death,  
A chorus-ending from Euripides—  
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears—  
As old and new at once as nature's self,  
To rap and knock and enter in our soul.

All this represents a very familiar type of experience. Such uprushes from the unconscious are often quite unaccountable, but they have a very real influence on our conscious life. All the evidence goes to show that they are active in religious conversion, and Starbuck quotes statistics to prove that sudden conversion is much more common among those whose emotional nature is strongly developed and who presumably therefore are more subject to influences from the subliminal. It must not be supposed, however, that the subconscious can be made responsible for all cases of conversion, still less that it can be regarded as a substitute for objective spiritual influences, or for the

action of God upon the soul. It is a factor in religious experience which has to be taken account of and provides an explanation of phenomena not otherwise easily explicable. It has been noted, for example, in the case of the Water Street Mission in New York, that the down-and-outs converted there are always those who had been under religious influences in their childhood.

How far the subconscious is operative in cases of abnormal religious development is very difficult to determine. Such cases are generally those of persons in a high condition of suggestibility, and it often happens that suggestions do not become active or fruitful until they have, as it were, incubated in the unconscious realm. Certain modern psychologists, on the assumption that all suggestion tends to become auto-suggestion, explain how ideas from without entering the unconscious mind are transformed into convictions and pass out as the original discovery of the person concerned. This no doubt may be the explanation of certain mystical phenomena, but it does not carry us very far. There is nothing morbid about such a process, nor is it in any way peculiar to the religious consciousness. The fact is that many religious psychopaths may be rightly described as religious geniuses, while others can only be classed with the insane. Dissociation of personality is by no means a necessary accompaniment of religious abnormality, and where it is found it cannot be said in any way to increase or enrich the value of the conscious life. James certainly exaggerates when he says :

'In the psychopathic temperament we have the emotionality which is the *sine qua non* of moral perception: we have the intensity and tendency to emphasize which are the essence of practical vigour: and we have the love of metaphysics and mysticism which carry one's interests beyond the surface of the sensible world. What, then, is more natural than that this temperament should introduce



one to regions of religious truth, to the corners of the universe which your robust Philistine type of nervous system, for ever offering its biceps to be felt, thumping its breast, and thanking heaven that it hasn't a single morbid fibre in its composition, would be sure to hide for ever from its self-satisfied possessor.'<sup>1</sup>

The logical issue of this is to ground both morals and religion in emotion, and there is no doubt that many American psychologists are inclined to do this. Starbuck, for example, would have it that religion is a matter of the affective life, and that cognitive processes have but little to do with it. He makes a sharp distinction between feeling and ideation, but claims for religious feeling as such that it has an objective content and enables man to adjust himself to the 'larger reality'. Pratt also finds the source of religion in vital feeling which produces unreasoned reactions to the universe, and also conveys truth to the mind. As we have already seen, there can be no question as to the importance of the part played by feeling in the religious consciousness, but the unfortunate consequence of emphasis on the unconscious and psychopathic elements in religion is to place the various factors in an entirely false perspective. We can only repeat that apart from the co-ordinating and interpretative work of the intellect feeling is blind, and does not even know itself to be feeling. That emotions have their home in the unconscious is true enough. There is there a whole world of material for religion as well as for other forms of conscious life, but it needs sifting and articulating, and that is the work of the conscious mind.

It must be remembered that the hypothesis of a sub-conscious region of the mind is not the only possible explanation of the phenomena of memory, association, &c., which originally gave rise to it. Many psychologists consider that the physiology of the brain accounts for

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 25.

everything, and that what are regarded as influences from the subconscious are due to a restimulation of brain tracts which have been influenced by previous experiences. This neural theory, as it is sometimes called, involves the setting up of a kind of brain habit, which makes possible a simple reproduction of ideas and experiences once realized but now buried or forgotten. This is given as the explanation of the sudden emergence into consciousness, under some stimulus conscious or otherwise, of long-forgotten scenes, words, or actions. Every one is aware of unaccountable recollections of this kind. Such a re-impression of familiar things may take place even though there is no conscious recollection. Coe quotes the following remarkable illustration :

‘An unlettered old Scotch woman came to her pastor declaring that she had a message from the Lord. Thereupon she delivered in English, a tongue not ordinarily at her command, a truly eloquent passage about the Dissenters. Her ordinary self was not capable of such thinking or of such diction. Inquiry proved that as a young woman she had been housemaid to an eloquent minister of English speech who had a way of rehearsing his sermons aloud at home, and whose sentiments concerning the Dissenters were those that the woman supposed that she was delivering from the Lord.’<sup>1</sup>

Such freaks of memory may no doubt be accounted for by a form of unconscious cerebration, but freaks of forgetfulness are not so easily explained. Freud has shown very clearly that forgetting is not the unconscious process that we think, but that it is generally motivated. There is a certain selective process in our memory which retains what is pleasant and favourable, and drops everything of a disagreeable kind. The popular comparison of the memory to a sieve is much more apt than we like to think, and if the unconscious is the forgotten then it is a very conscious process that is responsible for its contents. Nietzsche’s

<sup>1</sup> *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 203.

saying "I have done that," says my memory, "I could not have done that," says my pride, and remains inexorable. Finally my memory yields', expresses that of which most of us have had experience. Even Darwin confessed that he always made a note of facts and theories which appeared to be contrary to his own findings, because they were apt to be more easily forgotten than those which were favourable. All this goes to show that remembering and forgetting are not merely mechanical processes depending on automatic physiological conditions in the brain. No doubt such processes are a regular concomitant of all the actions or failures of memory. The repressions and censorships of which Freud and others make so much are connected with changes in the nervous system, but they cannot be explained by such changes. The whole process is more conscious than we are inclined to believe. Mind is at work in it even though we cannot at the moment trace its working. Thus no physiological explanation of the phenomena of the unconscious mind really explains. The fact remains that alongside of our waking consciousness there is, as it were, a sleeping consciousness, always liable to be roused under sufficient stimuli. The contents of it have been supplied at some time or other by the waking consciousness even though all recollection of the process may have ceased.

Very much the same may be said of the dissociation theory of the unconscious which makes it consist in a margin or penumbra round the focus of consciousness and within which experiences take place and rise, as it were, ready made when attention is called to them. We all know how in a half-waking state we find ourselves listening to sounds, e.g. the ringing of a bell, which we know have been going on for some time before they emerge into the waking field. In the same way we may suddenly become aware of thoughts or emotions which

have incubated in a region of dim attention before we were conscious of them. There are no doubt good physiological reasons for these phenomena of the sensory continuum. At the same time the ultimate source of the content of the subconscious mind is to be found in the past experiences of the individual or of the race. Physiology can, no doubt, explain and account for its operations up to a point, but the interest of psychology is in its effect on the conscious life, on habit and on behaviour in general.

So far as religion is concerned this influence may, as we have seen, be easily exaggerated. That religious ideas and experiences in adult life may be conditioned and even originated by past suggestions that have long been hidden out of sight in the unconscious region, goes without saying. It is an accepted axiom of religious education, and the only possible explanation of many of the phenomena accompanying religious awakening or conversion. During the war it was a very common experience to discover how the recollection of early Sunday School teaching, or of some simple hymn or verse of scripture learned in youth, suddenly emerged under stress of some emotion and proved the turning-point in a man's life. In the same way there is no doubt that in leading peoples of the lower culture to accept a higher type of religion, the religious background of the mind and primitive religious ideas become a very important consideration. This, however, is very far from proving that all cases of profound religious emotionalism can be accounted for by motor automatisms or by the working of a co-conscious personality. Many such cases are certainly psychopathic, but these are the extremes and the study of them is only useful as it shows us 'writ large', the phenomena which are to be found operating in cases which are anything but abnormal. The chief result of search into the subconscious is to show that man's religion, like all his experiences, is closely connected

with his psycho-physical life. It cuts deep into his life and is bound up with his whole being, is strongly influenced by his past, and is affected by his whole individual and even social history. This does not for a moment exclude the possibility of influence from an outside spiritual world. But it does suggest that, if such influence there be, the human personality on which the divine spirit acts, is not to be regarded as a *tabula rasa*, a clean white surface, but rather as a sensitive photographic plate, or even as a palimpsest. It is prepared for the impressions it may receive, and itself largely conditions or even determines the effect which such impressions will ultimately produce upon it. It further suggests that such influences come to us not in any abnormal or supernatural fashion, but through the ordinary processes of our nature, and that among these the subconscious mind plays a not unimportant part.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

J. Jastrow, *The Subconscious*, Boston, 1906.

Prince, *The Unconscious*, New York, 1914.

Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, New York, 1919.

Levine, *The Unconscious*, London, 1923.

McCurdy, *Problems in Dynamic Psychology*, New York, 1923.



## V

### CULT AND WORSHIP

So far we have been dealing with the psychology of religion mainly on its theoretical side and as representing a certain mental or psychical attitude. We have now to consider some of its more external and practical aspects. Of these the most important and the most familiar are found in the vast range of phenomena that come under the designations of ritual, cult, and worship. In the long history of the human race there is nothing more impressive than the spectacle of the immense volume of effort represented by the religious activities of mankind. In every age and among peoples at every stage of development we find these religious activities dominant in their interest. All the incidents in man's life—birth, puberty, marriage, and death—as well as all his occupations, both private and social, are marked by their appropriate religious ceremonies, and these are carried out with a care, devotion, and self-sacrifice that witness eloquently to his passionate belief in their importance and efficacy. Both in primitive and more advanced civilizations religious cultus is intimately bound up with man's conception of his welfare, and serves to regulate all his relations with his fellows and with the world around him. To an outside observer the problem which this offers is intriguing to a degree. He is compelled to ask as to the causes of this passionate and paramount interest in religious observances, how they come to be so deeply rooted in custom and to require such enormous sacrifices so willingly paid. He has to inquire as to their origin, growth, and maintenance, to lay bare their deeper meaning, and to study the causes of their

decay. He finds that many of them survive and continue to make their appeal long after their original significance has been lost, and he is faced always with the problem of their continuance in modern times and under intellectual conditions which seem incompatible with any real belief in their efficacy. All these are questions to which we must now address ourselves, and which raise psychological and philosophical problems of the utmost importance.

In the lives of primitive and savage peoples ritual and cultus occupy a very prominent place. Though it is by no means easy to discern their exact religious significance, there can be no doubt that the germs of worship are to be found here, and that they imply in every case some sense of the mysterious and sacred.<sup>1</sup> What Spencer and Gillen say of the aboriginal Australian in this regard is probably true of the childhood of mankind generally.

‘From the moment of a man’s initiation his life is sharply marked out into two parts. He has first of all what we may speak of as the ordinary life common to all the men and women, and associated with the procuring of food, and the performance of corroborees, the peaceful monotony of this part of his life being broken every now and again by the excitement of a fight. On the other hand, he has what gradually becomes of greater and greater importance to him, and that is the portion of his life devoted to matters of a sacred or secret nature. As he grows older he takes an increasing share in these, until finally this side of his life occupies by far the greater part of his thoughts. The sacred ceremonies which appear very trivial matters to the white man, are most serious matters to him. They are all connected with the great ancestors of his tribe, and he is firmly convinced that when it comes to his turn to die his spirit part will finally return to his old *alcheringa* home, where he will be in communion with them until such time as it seems good to him to undergo reincarnation.’<sup>2</sup>

It is, then, on this magico-religious view of life and the

<sup>1</sup> For the most recent and complete discussion of this, cf. *Das Heilige*, by R. Otto. Breslau, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 33.

world that primitive ritual is founded. The cult is the active side of religion; for primitive man acts out his belief when he is quite incapable of reasoning about it or of expressing it in words. His attitude is regulated by a sense of awe, and a feeling for the sacred and the mysterious, and he is led to perform certain acts in a certain way, not merely that he may propitiate unseen powers, though this is often a consideration, but that he may conserve his own well-being present and future as well as that of the community of which he is a member. The psychical factor underlying all this is the tendency to give a double meaning to events and things, and to attach to them a sanctity derived from a supersensible experience.

To the savage mind nothing is what it seems. In the world around him 'omnia exeunt in mysterium'. A brief study of the ceremonial practices of Australian tribes will illustrate this in connexion with the commonest events and transactions of human life. It is impossible, of course, to describe these practices in any detail, but enough may be said to indicate something of their meaning and purpose. We must distinguish between the private rites connected with birth, initiation, marriage, and death, and the public rites which concern more closely the life and ordinary activities of the whole tribe.

*Every fact is  
fused with  
mystery.*

The birth of a child was regarded as a matter of great moment and mystery, and was surrounded with a network of ceremonial and tabu of the most elaborate kind. Among the Australians, as among all savage peoples, women were the subject of all manner of rites at every period of their physical life, but pregnancy and birth were held to be especially sacred. In central Australia all children are regarded as re-incarnations of an ancestor spirit especially associated with the totem of the tribe, and this spirit is supposed to enter the body of the woman and to reappear in the child. Many of the birth ceremonies have

to do with influencing the transfer of the spirit from stones, &c., to the mother. Others may be regarded as intended to promote the health of mother and child, but the great majority of them are protective and seek to propitiate certain powers or to avoid certain obvious dangers. Before, and at the time of birth, the mother is carefully secluded, the husband is forced to leave her neighbourhood, though this is not a universal custom, and only special people, generally relations on her mother's side, are allowed to attend to her needs. After the birth both child and parents are unclean, and a whole cycle of rites is connected with their purification, generally by washing, fumigation, or the burning of all articles used at the birth. Charms and amulets of all kinds are hung on mother and child, and in parts of Central Africa newly born children are whitewashed to keep away the evil spirits. Everything goes to show that the child is regarded as entering a double life, and that alongside its ordinary physical experiences it will have to meet with others of a secret and sacred kind against which it must be armed. The same implications follow from many of the ceremonies connected with naming children, and birth ritual generally, though it contains practically no element of worship, gives ample evidence of the power of animistic religion and of the profound appeal which it makes to peoples of the lower culture.

Rites of initiation which mark entrance into full manhood and into the life and privileges of the tribe show very similar features among all peoples of the lower culture, and survivals of them are to be found in all forms of religion. They are carried out with the greatest care and the most scrupulous observance of traditional practice. They have a definitely religious meaning and illustrate again the vast importance attached by the primitive mind to the secret and sacred side of life. They generally include certain

processes intended to test courage and endurance such as the knocking out of teeth, tattooing, cutting of the flesh, fasting, and lonely vigils. In many cases this is accompanied by instruction in the secrets of the tribe and the totems, and in the name and nature of the god or gods, sometimes also by elementary, moral, or hygienic teaching in the form of dances or other pictorial representations of actions to be avoided. In most cases also circumcision is practised and often other and severer mutilations of the organs of sex. Women are subjected to these rites as well as men, but in their case the ceremonies are not so prolonged or so severe. The most general indication of these very varied ritual forms is the entrance into a new phase of being, a new birth, or even a rising from the dead, as, for example, when in South Australia an old man is buried under rubbish and rises from the grave under the eyes of the novices. In many cases it is assumed that the initiated enters into a kind of secret society, the sign or consequence of which is a sacramental relation with some deity. The whole thing is marked by innumerable tabus and is dominated by the feeling for the inner and sacred significance of the new life. This recognition of the sacred, and the desire which it involves to do all things in the prescribed way, is no doubt the germ from which worship arises, though the rites themselves are to us crude, cruel, and even disgusting. The mere description of them, though deeply interesting and very important as illustrating the similarity of intention among widely separated peoples, gives no real clue to their meaning. This can only be found through the underlying psychological processes and conditions, which are just those familiar to us in all animistic practices. The warning of Spencer and Gillen in regard to these elaborate ceremonies among the Australian aborigines is very much to the point :

‘It must be remembered that these ceremonies are per-



formed by naked, howling savages, who have no idea of permanent abodes, no clothing, no knowledge of any implements save those fashioned out of wood, bone, and stone, no idea whatever of the cultivation of crops, or of the laying in of a supply of food to tide over hard times, no word for any number beyond three, and no belief in anything like a Supreme Being. Apart from the simple but often decorative nature of the design drawn on the bodies of the performers or on the ground during the performance of ceremonies, the latter are crude in the extreme. It is one thing to read of these ceremonies, it is quite another thing to see them prepared and performed. A number of naked savages assemble on the ceremonial ground. They bring with them a supply of down which they have plucked from birds which they have killed with boomerangs or gathered from plants, and this down they grind on flat-stones, mixing it with pipe-clay or red ochre. Then drawing blood from their own veins they smear it over their bodies and use it as a gum, so that they can outline designs in white and red. While this is in progress they are chanting songs of which they do not know the meaning, and when all is ready and the performers are decorated, a group of men stand at one side of the ceremonial ground, the decorated men perform a series of more or less grotesque evolutions, and all is over. It is difficult if not impossible to write an account of the ceremonies of these tribes without conveying the impression that they have reached a higher stage of culture than is actually the case: but in order to form a just idea the reader must always bear in mind that though the ceremonies are very numerous, each one is in reality simple and often crude. It is only their number which causes them to appear highly developed.’<sup>1</sup>

The ceremonies attaching to marriage and death have the same kind of significance as those of birth and initiation. It is now generally recognized, as Westermarck contends, that marriage is a social institution, having its legal, economic, and religious aspects. Primitive marriage customs illustrate all of these, and it is not always easy to preserve the distinction between them. They show very clearly that there was something about the marriage union

<sup>1</sup> *Northern Tribes*, p. xiv.

which was regarded as sacred, and they point to the influence of the strong tabus connected with all matters of sex. We must understand, however, that this does not imply anything of the nature of a religious sanction to marriage, or of a religious service in connexion with it, in the sense that we are accustomed to. Marriage is a social contract, but one that must be entered into with due precautions, and in which care must be taken not to offend the unseen powers. In many primitive peoples there is no necessary or recognized relation between marriage and the propagation of the species. It is for both men and women the entrance into a new sphere or stage of existence, and as such must be duly protected by the prescribed rites. The whole question of sex relations is mysterious and sacred, and the rites in their original form imply little more than the recognition of this. They witness again to the hold which this feeling for the unseen and secret has for the peoples of the lower culture.<sup>1</sup> They will go to great lengths rather than risk any infringement of the laws which they believe should regulate behaviour in connexion with such matters. The practice in regard to marriage bears witness to the same psychological conditions as those which we find operative among primitive peoples in all their relationships of life.

The cult of the dead is among the most ancient and universal forms of human worship. Among all primitive peoples the dead are regarded as sacred and as belonging to the mysterious world of spirits. Even the relics of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic ages show that the dead were still regarded as living in some form, and were provided with clothing, food, alms, and drink for their use in the underworld. Among peoples of the lower culture there is abundant evidence of the belief in the soul's survival of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for these points, *The Baganda*, by John Roscoe, and *The Lango*, a Nilotic Tribe of Uganda, by J. H. Driberg.

death and of the desire to facilitate its passage and secure its favour for the living. Many of the practices connected with the cult of the dead in its primitive form show that mourning often became a religious exercise. The removal of clothes, e.g., may be regarded as a return to primitive dress in honour of the spirits. The cutting of the flesh and the hair is a form of sacrifice, both blood-offerings and hair-offerings being peculiarly acceptable in the spirit world. The covering of the head or the mouth and the scattering of dust and ashes are forms of protection against the released spirit, and fasting suggests either a tabu or a ritual preparation for the funeral ceremonies. Among many peoples funeral feasts are a form of sacrifice. Prayers to the dead are very common and often take the form of elaborate appeals for his favour and help to the living. Here, again, there is abundant evidence of belief in a spirit world peopled by the dead and having contact with and power over the living. It is the belief which underlies not only ancestor-worship, but the whole animistic aspect of religion.<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to rites which have to do, not with individuals, but with the life and interests of the tribe, we find among primitive peoples many forms of ritual which contain at least the elements of worship. The first and paramount concern of the tribe is undoubtedly in its food supply. Among the central Australians totem names are chiefly derived from plants or animals which serve the tribe as food, and there is a whole group of rites which are intended to secure a good supply of these. Among the most familiar are the so-called Intichiuma ceremonies. These take place at the time of the year suitable for the breeding of the animal or the flowering of the plant, and the natives

<sup>1</sup> For an elaborate discussion of this whole subject cf. *Spiritualism and the Cult of the Dead in Antiquity*, by Prof. L. B. Paton, of Hartford, Conn.

believe that they have a direct influence on fecundity, and that if this is not the case it is because the effect of the ritual has been hindered by some malignant power. Each tribe believes that its ancestors once lived on earth and that traces of them are to be found in stones, rocks, trees, plants, &c. These are taken actually to represent the totem, animal or vegetable as the case may be, and are a permanent reserve of life. They therefore play an important part in the Intichiuma ritual. For example, Durkheim thus describes the Intichiuma of the Witchetty grub :

‘When the men of the totem have assembled, they leave the camp, leaving only two or three of their number behind. They advance in a profound silence, one behind another, all naked, without arms or any of their habitual ornaments. Their attitude and pace are marked with a religious gravity: this is because the act in which they are taking part has an exceptional importance in their eyes. Also, until the end of the ceremony they are required to observe a rigorous fast. The country which they traverse is all filled with souvenirs left by the glorious ancestors. Thus they arrive at a spot where a huge block of quartz is found, with small stones all around it. The block represents the witchetty grub as an adult. The Alaturja (ceremonial leader) strikes it with a sort of wooden tray called apinara, and at the same time he intones a chant, whose object is to invite the animal to lay eggs. He proceeds in the same fashion with the stones which are regarded as the eggs of the animal and with one of which he rubs the stomach of each assistant. . . . When the Alaturja strikes the sacred stones it is to detach some dust. The grains of this very holy dust are regarded as so many germs of life: each of them contains a spiritual principle which will give birth to a new being, when introduced into an organism of the same species. The branches with which the assistants are provided serve to scatter this precious dust in all directions: it is scattered everywhere, to accomplish its fecundating work. By this means they assure, in their own minds, an abundant reproduction of the animal species over which the clan guards, so to speak, and upon which it depends.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p. 328.

Many of the Intichiuma ceremonies are blood rites. In them the blood of the participants is freely shed, sometimes on the sacred stones, sometimes on pictures of animals drawn in the sand, and sometimes in water. In all cases it is supposed to produce animals or fishes as the case may be. In one ceremony kangaroo dung is wrapped in leaves and burned and the ashes scattered to the winds by men of the kangaroo clan, in order to produce kangaroos. The Intichiuma generally closes with the ceremonial eating of the totem animal by men of the totem group. This is clearly a very early form of sacrifice. As Durkheim points out, all sacrifice contains two elements, an act of communion and an act of oblation. In the Intichiuma we have communion between the totem man and the totem, and various forms of offering. It is true that there is no idea of a God or even of a spirit to whom the offering is to be made. But the psychological conditions which operate wherever sacrifice is made are surely present. There is the desire to obtain benefit for the worshippers, the sense that a due price must be paid for it and the due rites performed, and the belief that this can be best accomplished through close communion with the mysterious power concerned. Here, again, we have to recognize the fact that under the stress of its physical needs, and in the conviction that the unseen powers can be influenced at will, human nature tends to work in the same way at all times and in all parts of the world. There is no doubt that the social element in these early forms of ritual is very important and points to a tribal consciousness which has in it at least the beginnings of an ethico-social outlook. To quote Durkheim again :

‘Society as a whole is interested that the harvest be abundant, that the rain fall at the right time and not excessively, and that the animals produce regularly. So it is society that is the foreground of every consciousness : it dominates and directs all conduct : this is equivalent to



saying that it is more living and active, and consequently more real than in profane times. So men do not deceive themselves when they feel at this time that there is something outside of them which is born again, that there are forces which are reanimated and a life which reawakens. This renewal is in no way imaginary and the individuals themselves profit from it. For the spark of a social being which each bears within him necessarily participates in this collective renovation. The individual soul is regenerated too by being dipped again in the source from which its life comes: consequently it feels itself stronger, more fully master of itself, less dependent upon physical necessities.<sup>1</sup>

Durkheim's exposition of *Intichiuma* raises the whole question of the origin and meaning of sacrifice in primitive religion. Among pre-animistic peoples there is an evident desire to obtain by quasi-sacramental means some physical contact with the totem. The man believes himself to be the plant or animal which is his totem, and seeks to assimilate its substance. The process is a very solemn one and is surrounded with a sense of mystery which all the ceremonial connected with it serves to enhance. It is not, however, until we reach an animistic or theistic stage of religion that sacrifice involves offerings of food, blood, &c., in order to secure the help or avert the disfavour of the spirits or Gods. In most later forms of sacrifice the ideas of oblation and communion are closely intermingled. Early sacrifices are generally food rites, as when in agricultural communities the first fruits of the crops are offered to the ancestor spirits before they can be eaten by the people. Frazer quotes innumerable cases of the kind, more or less elaborate in form. In their simplest form they merely require the laying of corn or fruit before trees or stones which represent the ancestral spirit. In others, again, the corn is sprinkled with human blood and eaten sacramentally, while among the Aztecs of Mexico there is

<sup>1</sup> *Elementary Forms*, p. 348.

found the custom of sacramentally eating bread which is supposed to be the actual body of the god. In some cases the bread is mixed with the blood of a human victim, and the eating of it constitutes a very definite union of the human and the divine. The psychological condition involved in all these customs is the intense craving of humanity for contact with deity and the spirit world. This will become clear as we examine the ritual and worship of more advanced forms of religion, and to these we must now turn.

In Egypt, for example, we find a strikingly uniform type of worship throughout the whole country. It is marked by a liturgy used in the worship of all the gods, but based on that originally framed for the service of the Sun God at Heliopolis. The king is regarded as the son and high-priest of this god, and the cult of all local divinities is assimilated to that of the Sun God in order to increase their prestige. The constitution of the subordinate priesthoods is based on this idea of sonship, and all priests went through the lustrations and purifications proper to the Pharaoh himself. Later the cult was influenced by the Osiris legend, and every god was regarded as an Osiris while the king and the priests played the part of Horus his son. The dominant idea in the constitution of the priesthood was that of purification and the avoidance of any ceremonial uncleanness, and the whole worship was based on the ceremonial toilet, crowning, lustration, robing, and anointing of the Pharaoh for his priestly task. This ceremonial was of the most elaborate kind, and the object of it was to obtain the favour of the god for the king. In return for the offerings, hymns, music, &c., he would bestow upon his son life, victory, health, and joy. In this cult the image of God took an important place and his daily toilet formed a regular part of the ritual. His meals were food and drink offerings that had been duly purified, and the

elaborate music was in his honour. In the heretic Aton cult of King Amenophis (Akhnaton) the same ideas and practices are found with the exception that there is no cultus image of the god and no toilet ceremonial, and that the queen takes an equal part in the worship with the king. Egyptian worship generally is based on the idea of the dependence of man on the gods and on the need to take the due ritual means for securing the benefits which they can bestow. The most essential of these are the offerings which the god requires and the purification which is necessary to make the offerings acceptable. Through the king and the priests a close relation is set up between the gods and the worshippers, and this helps to give value to the hymns, prayers, and music in their honour.

Hindu worship is largely based on sacrifice—the main object of which is to secure the favour of the gods and avert their wrath. Very little of the expiatory element is present, though the expiation of sin occupies a considerable place in the Vedic law-books. But it is there more a matter of morals than of ritual. There are two main classes of Hindu sacrifice. First those which are regular and occur at stated seasons of the year, or in the course of the duties of daily life, and secondly those which are occasioned by the special and temporary needs of the worshipper. To sacrifices generally very little ethical meaning is attached. The idea of coercive magic is never far away. The gods are invited to come and take their share, and the whole ceremony, if it is duly performed, is regarded as something that compels the attention and secures the goodwill of the gods. In the more domestic sacrifices the householder and his wife can take part, though that part is usually confined to making the due preparations. A Brahmana is generally needed to complete the rite. Great care is taken in selecting the right time and in making the personal preparations for the rite—shaving, bathing,

anointing, and fasting are all common. The substances of the sacrifice are very varied. Milk, cakes, honey, the juice of the soma plant, goats, rams, bulls, and in earlier days even horses and human beings. Both the offerings and those who offer them have to undergo certain preparatory precautions if the rite is to be successful. Whatever is used in the approach to the gods must be hallowed and has a certain mystic power. Professor Hillebrandt thus describes one of the commonest forms of Hindu consecration ceremonies, the Paryaguikarana.

‘The priest takes a firebrand and carries it three times round the oblation or the animal, describing thus a magic circle in order to keep off the demons and make the victim appropriate to the gods. Several libations precede the main offering. In an animal sacrifice the divine essence which permeates the animal when it is on the point of being immolated, and sent along the path of the gods, communicates itself to the yajamana who touches it on its way to the slaughtering place with the two spits on which the vapa (omentum) is later to be roasted. After the recitation of expiatory mantras apologizing for the crime to be committed, the animal is “quieted” by strangulation. Those performers who are not immediately concerned in this act step back and sit down turning their faces towards the fire in order to avoid being eye-witnesses of the act. The religious drama has then reached its climax. Among the parts of the animal assigned to the gods the omentum is most conspicuous: the blood is poured out for the demons who later receive also the husks of the grain. Special parts of the principal oblations form the ida, which is the portion of the priests and the sacrificer and is regarded as a mystic deity who is invoked with great solemnity to come together with other mystic powers of the universe and bestow prosperity on the yajamana. The ceremony then gradually relaxes: the tissue has been woven, it must be dissolved again.’<sup>1</sup>

Here, as in Hindu worship generally, the gods must be rightly approached if their favours are to be won, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*. Article on ‘Worship (Hindu)’, p. 797.

ceremonial is regarded as giving the right mystic or holy touch to the persons and things concerned. They have to undergo a real metamorphosis before they can serve the purpose of the rite.

Among the Greeks the origin of worship is similar to that of other peoples of antiquity. It contains little or nothing of the ethical and spiritual, and the cult itself probably precedes in time the theological ideas based upon it. The prime motive is an overwhelming sense of dependence on the gods and a desire to obtain the benefits they have to bestow. Most of the festivals are seasonal in their origin, and the ritual attached to them, at first largely accidental, soon becomes fixed by custom (νόμος). We have to distinguish the primitive or animistic stage in Greek religion from the later and anthropomorphic. In the former the objects of worship are sacred places, things, and animals. Their worshipful character depends on something unusual or uncanny about them and on the sense of awe which such things evoke. They must be approached with circumspection, and every care must be taken to avert the mischief which they have it in their power to do.

‘But there are higher mysteries than these: the mystery of death and birth, of growth and adolescence, of the regular recurrence of the seasons, of mother love and self-sacrifice, of instincts “which aspire to immortality and seem to promise it”. It is by way of such mysteries that the religion of fear becomes transformed and transfigured into something higher: if not into a religion of love which is an essentially Christian idea, at least into a religion in which reverence is more prominent than fear, in which the gods are no longer imagined as the jealous enemies of mankind, but as their protectors. Swift to punish transgression, yet they do not will that any should perish. They are givers of good things if they are also givers of evil. Even if they deal to men “two evils for one good”, only the foolish murmur. Good men loyally accept the conditions of mortality, turning the bright side out.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. xii, p. 783.



On the more anthropomorphic side, Greek religion shows many traces of worship of the dead and of heroes. In Homer libations to the dead and feasts in their honour are very common. The ritual is carried out at the tomb and the offerings are poured into it, the foods are burnt and not consumed and prayers are offered to the dead. Heroes too are worshipped with processions, burnt-offerings, and prayers, always at night time. The same ritual is observed in the case of local, territorial, or chthonian deities. When we come to the Olympian deities, however, ceremonial is much more elaborate. Here the image of the God is essential to the rite, and there are altars, shrines, temples, and priests. The ritual comprises prayer and sacrifice, and there is a strong sense of the sanctity of all the accessories of the worship, whether men, places, or things.

It is unnecessary to multiply illustrations of religious worship. The same features recur among all the more developed forms of religion, many of the most primitive being found as constant survivals even after their original force has been spent. These point to the same underlying psychological conditions.

As we have already seen, among these conditions the herd instinct is very prominent. Religion does involve a consciousness of social values, and this consciousness is powerful in determining the form of religious rites. But it is not the only or even the chief consideration involved. The contention of certain sociological psychologists like Ames, King, Durkheim, and others, that religious cultus has its rise in the form of social life and is the reflection of certain important group interests, can hardly now be maintained. It is quite possible to distinguish among the social activities of peoples of the lower culture those which have a purely social complexion and those which have a religious significance. These latter connect the social interest with other interests which we can only call

religious, and in which reference is had to something external in the nature of mana, spirit, or God. The cult in the long run is regulated partly by social considerations and partly by the local ideas of the spirit world, ideas which will vary greatly among different peoples and in different places.

As ritual develops we have to reckon with the universal and binding force of custom. What habit is in determining the behaviour of individuals that custom is in society. It is a well-marked psychical trait that inclines men to act in crystallized forms and to follow beaten tracks, and when this tendency receives religious sanction it becomes even more binding. Add to this the force of the gregarious instinct which impels men to act in unison with their fellows and to seek a corporate sanction to the expression of their fundamental instincts, and we have a quite natural explanation of the hold which ritual acquires. The love of ceremony for its own sake has also to be reckoned with. This is seen running through the whole of human life from the games of children to the pageantry of courts and the loftiest expressions of religious ceremonial.

A further element to be noted in maintaining ritual and shaping the forms of worship is man's desire to give some visible form to the objects of his belief and reverence. This is seen in the cruder fetishisms and image worship of savages as well as in the visible and material accessories of worship among peoples of higher culture. Even where the ideal of worshipping in spirit and in truth is recognized and pursued, there is a constant tendency to hark back to more material forms, and this has to be reckoned with as a tendency always operative in man's communion with God. The psychological effect of it is to deepen the sense of reality in worship, and it lies at the root of every form of religious symbolism. One of the best illustrations of its power is seen in Buddhism where a religion, originally

without gods or cult, has developed an elaborate form of image worship in response to the needs of its adherents. The same principle is seen at work in the history of religious art which may be regarded as another form of the spontaneous response to a fundamental need of the human spirit. Here imagination has come to the help of the spiritual sense with striking and permanent results.

1. In the history of religion on its ceremonial side two tendencies are to be noted, each of which has some psychological significance. The first is a certain stereotyping process which seems inevitable in the case of external religious observances. The magical significance once attaching to them is lost under the influence of education, but the forms are retained because they lend solemnity and the sanction of the past to religious acts. This is found, not only in connexion with religion, but wherever ancient forms, terms, postures, or usages are retained in order to give the sanction of custom to acts of special significance. If this is allowable in connexion with Courts, judicial procedure, or Universities, much more so in religious worship. Here the need to enhance the importance of what is being done gives to custom and tradition a special sanction. The mere form supplies something that is needed, and witnesses to the power of habit in the highest as well as in the lowliest human activities.

2. On the other hand, and in the second place, we have to note the gradual emergence of what may be called a spiritual protest against the externalism of ceremonial and worship. The attitude so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets has many parallels. In later Judaism even a rite like circumcision was held to be capable of a deeper religious meaning, e.g. 'circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be not stiffnecked'. So in the Koran true righteousness belongs to him who 'fears the merciful in secret and brings a repentant heart' as well as performs

the rites. So in the *Bhagavadgita* we read, 'Whatever oblation is offered, whatever is given, whatever penance is performed, and whatever is done without faith, that O Son of Pritha, is called Asat, and that is naught, both after death and here.' It would seem as though formalism brings its reaction and gradually loses its hold when it loses its life. The fact testifies to the strength and persistence of the religious element in man's consciousness. There is a spirit in man which cannot be altogether quenched and which tends always to revive and pierce the crust of the material with which it is overlaid. In all the various forms of worship we find this element asserting itself. When it fails of suitable expression through the hardening influence of habit it cuts for itself new channels, a process which bears witness to the vitality of man's religious nature and also surely to the power of the Spirit of God.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following:

- James, *Primitive Ritual and Belief*, London, 1917.  
Henke, *Study in the Psychology of Ritualism*, Chicago, 1910.  
Hartland, *Ritual and Belief*, New York, 1917.  
Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, New York, 1898.  
Köstlin, *Geschichte des christlichen Gottesdienstes*, Freiburg, 1887.  
Marrett, *Psychology and Folk Lore*, London, 1919.

## VI

### BELIEF IN GOD

ONE of the most prominent features in religion the world over is the belief in a God or Gods. Indeed, religion has often been defined just in those terms, though it is now recognized that such a definition would only apply to certain stages in religious development. There are religions like Buddhism, without gods, and there are many primitive faiths in which the idea of God is, to say the least of it, rudimentary. These, however, are some of the exceptions which prove the rule. The idea of God has a sure place in the religious consciousness of mankind. We are not here concerned chiefly with either the origin or the content of the idea of God.<sup>1</sup> These inquiries belong to anthropology and theology. Our concern is rather with the place which the idea holds in man's mind and life, and with his attitude towards it. That attitude is generally described as belief, and the psychology of belief will therefore concern us. It is also to be described as worship and therefore the relation of belief to cult and of both to man's religious development will have to be taken into account.

One of the earliest definitions of belief is that of St. Thomas Aquinas, 'Credere est cum assensu cogitare'. Believing, that is, is something more than thinking, it means assenting to the thing thought, i.e. accepting it as real or true. Further, it is not to be confined to believing that

<sup>1</sup> For this cf. *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens*, by Archbishop Söderblom of Upsala.



God or Gods exist, it involves also a certain conception of their value. Hence on the side of man it is an attitude of the whole personality and may involve action, as well as a certain mental state. When a man really believes he does so with his whole being and becomes involved in an attitude of trust, loyalty, and self-committal. This is religious belief at its highest, but there are many intermediate stages between it and the earliest form of fearful assent to the idea that there are such things as spirits or gods and that they are concerned with men.

The psychology of belief is not difficult. To the psychologist beliefs are neither true nor false; they are simply mental facts and are to be explained by the operation of mental laws. The state of mind which we call belief may be produced in a great variety of ways and is more easily attainable by some than by others. It is of course to be distinguished from knowledge or absolutely objective certainty, with which psychology is not primarily concerned, and it is always conditioned by the mental state or habit of the subject. For many people, e.g., 'seeing is believing', i.e. belief depends on the direct sense impression which alone to them can produce certainty. But there is a very real sense in which it is true that 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed'. For to believe on other evidence than that of sense impression argues a more active mind and is a more complex operation. Very seldom is belief the result of a strict ratiocinative process. In most of us emotion and desire play their part in producing it; in other words, it is temperamentally conditioned. But, however produced, it represents a definite mental attitude, the assurance that the event, fact, or idea in question is real or true. As Hume puts it, 'An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea that the fancy alone presents to us.' Or in the words of a modern writer: 'In belief we are conscious of something real existing

independently of ourselves, to which our actions must adjust themselves if we would attain our ends. In work or serious activity this attitude of belief is present. Our activity is with reference to a real independent world: the ends we seek belong to a system of real ends and real values existing and subsisting independently of us, and recognized by others as well as by ourselves. In make-believe all this is reversed. The world of make-believe is a self-created world, and, while we may strive to adjust ourselves to the conditions of that world, we do so knowing all the time that, if we so choose, we may alter these conditions, that we are under no compulsion to act in accordance with them, or even to act at all, unless in so far as we place ourselves under compulsion. So with the ends we seek and the values we recognize. These are only ends and values in the make-believe world we have created for ourselves, not in the real world which is independent of our whims, wishes, and desires.<sup>1</sup>

Here there is raised the question of the relation between belief and credulity. It is better perhaps not to draw any hard and fast lines of distinction, but to recognize that there are degrees in credulity, as in credibility. One man will believe where others entirely refuse to do so. It is very difficult to estimate the legitimacy or illegitimacy, the pertinence or impertinence, of the various causes predisposing to belief, but it is impossible to rule out all save those of a purely intellectual kind. Belief is often a matter of values as well as of fact, and emotional conditions cannot therefore be excluded. In the long run, however, they have all to be brought to the bar of logical determination. The distinction between belief and credulity must be maintained.

At the back of all history lies the history of belief, and intellectual progress shows the gradual emancipation of the mind from make-believe, superstition, and credulity. At first men believe easily and upon any kind of evidence. Things are held to be what they seem, and reasons for

<sup>1</sup> *The Psychology of Every-day Life*, by James Dreyer, p. 58.

things are given on a very inadequate apprehension of the working of cause and effect. The appreciation of truth for its own sake and the determination to believe only what can be justifiably regarded as true or real, is only reached after long struggle and conflict, and even then has great difficulty in holding the field. Men believe and are content to believe for many other reasons than mere love of truth. We are supposed to be living at the present time in a scientific age, and to bring everything to the test of the scientific method of observation and experiment. Unproved theories, or theories at present incapable of proof are supposed to be regarded as hypotheses only tenable so long as they work. Yet even under such conditions as these we find that men remain credulous to a degree and lend themselves readily to believing on grounds the insecurity of which has been abundantly demonstrated in the past. In all matters of belief it seems impossible to escape from emotional and temperamental factors.

For example, belief on authority is far too common and indiscriminating. In the education of the individual and of the race authority has undoubtedly its part to play. There are times and circumstances when nothing else is open to us. Where there is ignorance on the one side and expert knowledge on the other the voice of authority has every right to make itself heard and to be listened to. But all education worth the name is a process whereby we are emancipated from bondage to others and led to think for ourselves and to frame our own beliefs on evidence. It then becomes a question of testing our evidence and believing only on good and reasonable grounds. It is here that the difficulties emerge. Exceptions apart, human nature loves to follow the line of least resistance. To submit to authority and to take one's belief ready-made is so safe and easy that men are not inclined to question too closely the title or qualifications of those who set up to be

their guides. Only let them speak with sufficient confidence and have a sufficient following and nothing further will be required. There are multitudes who are temperamentally unfitted to think for themselves, and who feel intolerably naked and lonely until they are able to clothe and fortify themselves with the ideas and opinions of others. This is particularly the case in connexion with the authority of public opinion. The herd instinct is very strong in all of us, and to swim with the stream in matters of opinion is a temptation which very few can resist. The spectacle of Athanasius *contra mundum* is a very rare one, and the world has an uncomfortable habit of stoning its prophets. We have to reckon here with the influence of mass suggestion on the one hand, and on the other with that intellectual inertia which disposes men to yield to it especially in matters of opinion. An interesting example of the lengths to which this may be carried in a modern democratic state is to be found in a bill recently brought before the legislature of Kentucky. Its title runs 'An act to prohibit the teaching in public schools and other public institutions of learning, of Darwinism, atheism, agnosticism or evolution as it pertains to the origin of man'. The bill was introduced at the instance of various Christian sects, and had behind it such a weight of public opinion, that it very nearly became a law of the state. As Mr. Julian Huxley, commenting upon it says, 'The danger of democratic control of education is that the average man may wish to impose on the next generation that idea of the universe which he finds comfortable instead of trusting in truth.' The remedy, of course, is the adoption of the principle of free speech and free thinking, a regime which gives truth the fullest chance of coming to the top'.<sup>1</sup>

Closely allied with this readiness to submit to authority

<sup>1</sup> *Athenaeum* for April 8, 1922, p. 69.

in matters of belief is the attitude now generally known as the will to believe. With the average man the wish is very easily the father to the thought. He believes what he likes to believe, and because he likes it, though he may give his reasons for it in very different terms. In very many cases it is the chief function of reason to persuade men that what they like to believe is true. This is due partly no doubt to the influence of mass suggestion, but partly also to habit and to the native shrinking from the effort, friction and struggle that must always accompany the acceptance of new and unwelcome facts, ideas, and aspects of truth. Hence the strength of the resistance to progress in thought whether scientific, religious, or philosophic. Hence, too, the credulous acceptance of any ideas which seem to fit in with the mood of the moment, or to substantiate beliefs which we should only be too glad to accept as true. A striking instance of this was forthcoming in the early months of the Great War when multitudes of English people, by no means all of them fools, undoubtedly believed that a great Russian army had been secretly conveyed through the country and landed in France. It is now known that the story arose from the fact that a dozen or so Russian Staff Officers did land somewhere in the north and pass through to France. But in its exaggerated form it was greedily accepted, embellished, and supported by all kinds of imaginary evidence. It so fell in with the desires and hopes of every one in those dark days that these practically created the belief. A similar instance may be seen in the refusal of many people to believe in the death of Lord ✓ Kitchener in spite of the melancholy evidence to the contrary. No doubt the nervous strain of the war predisposed men and women to such irrational exhibitions as these. But they are only exceptional examples of the working of a law to which we are always subject, and which disposes us to believe what we wish rather than that to which we



are compelled by evidence. It is a case where the balance of the faculties needs to be restored and the testimony of the will and the emotions brought to the bar of reason.

In modern times there is a widespread tendency to find the grounds of belief in action rather than in any intellectual process. We must believe a thing because it works, tends to human well-being, and adds to the values of life. We have already seen that such pragmatism will not furnish a general philosophical basis for our interpretation of the universe, though it contains a working principle of some importance. The pragmatic test that a thing is known by its fruits holds good and appeals to common sense, but is not to be regarded as the sole criterion of truth. It has a real function to perform in connexion with religion. Religious belief rests very largely on experience, and the test of it is the kind of conduct it produces and the contribution that it makes to life. But it must always be remembered that the whole process of applying this test and passing judgement upon it is an intellectual process. Experience no doubt supplies the data, but the data are offered to mind or intelligence and from its verdict there is no appeal. Religious belief, like belief in other regions of thought, often takes the form of an hypothesis, waiting to be verified by experience and destined to be itself modified by the growth of that experience. But the religious hypothesis is so wide-reaching and fundamental that it is never more than in process of verification, though it works with sufficient effect to form a justifiable ground of belief. At the same time, it must be repeated that the knowledge that it works is an intellectual judgement and by it religious belief stands or falls. Sir Henry Jones puts the matter very emphatically when he says :

‘In no way or degree can religious belief escape the tests we apply to other convictions. Its claim to be true and not false brings religion out into the open. It is liable to

be attacked by the whole world, and, if it is true, it is capable of being upheld and ratified by the whole world. Indeed, so far from being less a matter for the intelligence than others, less liable to attack, or less capable of support, it is much more. Religion claims ultimate truth and final worth. It comes forth as the supreme interpreter. If religion is in its nature true, then it must provide the possibility of reconciling all the contradictions of existence, and perverse incongruities of man's behaviour and apparent destiny. Its truth will be justly tested and tried, and even doubted, as long as there is one incident that has not found its fitting place. Religion cannot be true now and then and here and there only, any more than mathematics can.'<sup>1</sup>

We are now in a position to inquire more closely into the genesis and nature of belief in God, in the light of the foregoing analysis of the grounds of belief. The belief in God, like religion itself, involves a highly complex mental attitude, and takes a vast variety of forms. The history of religion shows us gods great and small, good and evil, personal and impersonal. But in all the various ideas of God there are certain common features which point to some identity in the psychological conditions which gave them birth. If, as we have seen, religion is the natural expression of man's reaction to the universe around him, the belief in a God or Gods is the almost universal form given to that expression. Even in a religion like Buddhism, which on its theological side and in the hands of its chief exponents is entirely without the idea of God, the popular cultus has demanded and created not one God but gods many. The origin of the god-idea varies with different peoples, and under different conditions, but underlying it is the tendency to personalize or individualize the powers, good or evil, with which men feel themselves in contact. Whatever be its origin, there is no doubt that the expression of the idea of God is largely determined by the social and geographical conditions of the peoples concerned. The

<sup>1</sup> *A Faith that Enquires*, p. 90.

form which it takes is almost invariably anthropomorphic or theriomorphic, and imagination is allowed to play very freely round the idea. Thus among the Australian aborigines there are certain leading tribal gods conceived under forms which vary very little in widely separated areas.<sup>1</sup> Under the names of Bunjil, Baiame, and Daramulun we have the conception of a powerful and eternal being who, after a life on earth, was taken up to heaven, where he lives surrounded by his family. He is the creator of men and things and has power over nature. He is the benefactor of humanity and to him men owe all the arts and amenities of life. He is the guardian of morals and the dispenser of justice both now and after death. The tribal initiation rites are his cult, and he is deeply concerned to have them duly carried out. From this Durkheim argues that these great Gods are really phratry totems who have been deified. As they are chiefly connected with the ceremonies of initiation whose main effect is to manufacture men, there is ascribed to them a certain creative power and prestige above other gods. 'In fact the great tribal God is only an ancestral spirit who finally won a pre-eminent place. The ancestral spirits are only entities forged in the image of individual souls whose origin they are destined to explain.'<sup>2</sup>

It is generally true that man tends to make God, or gods after his own image, and these elementary forms of the god-idea serve to illustrate the way in which God is conceived in more highly developed religious systems. Common to most religions is the desire to enter into relations with some external and powerful person or persons. Such a sense of personal relationship does not, of course,

<sup>1</sup> So in the Lango tribe of Uganda we find side by side with the worship of ancestral spirits, a kind of monotheism, in the worship of the high God Jok who is an all pervading deity of the air, the creator of heaven and earth and the source of all life.

<sup>2</sup> *Elementary Forms*, p. 295.

always imply belief in a supreme God. It may be satisfied by an ancestral spirit or guardian angel, or by some inferior deity. But the consciousness of a relation and the desire to give to that relation something more than a subjective value, i. e. to discover reality in the object to which it points, is characteristic of man's expression of the God concept, both in its elementary and more highly developed forms. Further, the concept also involves belief in the causal and creative effectiveness of the Divine power or person. This in its turn determines man's attitude towards the power, dependence, awe, worship, and the like. This attitude is constantly exemplified in human relations as in the admiration evoked by special skill or knowledge. We see it raised to the highest power in connexion with God. Leuba describes the situation quite truly when he says:

'One of the most useful propensities of man is to ascribe to unseen beings, without strict regard to their original nature, the ability to supply all the wants of the tribe and of the individual. It is truly a remarkable habit—that of imagining in other beings coveted powers and virtues, and of turning these powers, by supplications and offerings to one's own benefit, or of enriching oneself with these virtues by means of sympathetic communion.'<sup>1</sup>

But the concept of God, besides containing the ideas of personal relationship and causal power, shows, even in its simpler and more primitive forms, a certain reflective element. It helps man to make sense of his universe. It gives him a reason and explanation for many things that would otherwise remain riddles, and enables him to satisfy some of his most elementary moral and intellectual demands. The idea of God gives a sense of perspective to the Weltanschauung even of most unsophisticated people, and adds a new and powerful sanction to morals. This is no doubt an element in religious experience long before it takes any conscious logical form. Its expression

<sup>1</sup> *A Psychological Study of Religion*, p. 112.

belongs to theology rather than to religion, but the theology to which it gives rise is rooted and grounded in experience. An experience which is concerned with the ultimate facts and values of life must at length formulate itself in terms which can be shown to be psychologically and objectively effective. Here, again, we have the work of the intellect passing judgement on the psychical experiences which underlie all the great religious concepts.

'Thus the supernatural and unknown in religion are not necessarily taken at their own valuation; the average prevailing type of mind insists upon passing its own judgement upon the data, and the holy is so, not because it happens to survive or is merely imposed upon men, but because in the long run the mind of its own will recognizes it as such. The natural and the supernatural, the known and the unknown, come within the horizon of the individual consciousness, and in the lengthy history of religion the prevailing practical average opinion spontaneously recognizes the necessity of distinguishing between good and bad religion—a distinction which again and again individuals are genuinely unable to recognize.'<sup>1</sup>

With the caution here indicated in our minds, we may now return to the consideration of the question as to the psychological bases of present day belief in God. In doing so we shall find in operation just those factors on which the history of religious belief lays the greatest stress. Professor Pratt, following Bains's psychological analysis, enumerates the following four types of religious belief: '(1) authoritative or habitual; (2) reasoned; (3) emotional; and (4) volitional, according as the belief is based upon the natural credulity of the mind, upon some form of argument explicit or implicit, upon an emotional experience, usually of the mystical sort, or finally, upon the will to believe.'<sup>2</sup>

In studying these various types of the believing mind

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Cook, Art. on Religion. *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. x, p. 688.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 210.



Professor Pratt makes a good deal of use of the results of a *questionnaire* which he initiated. To the inquiry 'why do you believe in God?' he elicited 367 replies. These he has classified under the headings given above and claims that the result shows the relative importance of these various factors in determining belief. He is conscious himself that the method followed is not altogether satisfactory and he does not hesitate to express his conviction that some of the figures arrived at need to be corrected. He also realizes, as we have already pointed out, that the psychological roots of faith are not to be found in any one faculty, but that it is the action and attitude of the whole personality, though one element generally predominates over others. Bearing this in mind then we find that the authoritative or habitual type of belief is very common. Professor Pratt found it in 25 per cent. of the cases he examined, and is of opinion that it accounts for a good many more. As we have already seen most people owe at least the beginnings of their belief in God to this source. They take it from their parents, or teachers, or from the society in which they are brought up. As James puts it, their 'faith is faith in some one else's faith'. But even when faith has reached a reflective stage this element in it persists. The authority of tradition, Church, or sacred books, is widely and willingly accepted among those who distrust their own reasoning processes, and are only comfortable when they can feel some sure foundation beneath them. In Catholic Christianity belief in the Church and in the dicta of those who have the right to speak in the name of the Church is widespread, and is regarded as a legitimate refuge in times of religious doubt and unrest. Among Protestants, on the other hand, the infallible book, regarded as the very word of God, fulfils the same function. One of the results of the religious disturbance produced in this country by the war has been a marked recrudescence of the doctrine of the

verbal inspiration of the scriptures, and a definite inclination of the minds of men to those Churches that claim to speak with authority. Under the stress of adverse circumstances men crave for a 'Thus saith the Lord', and readily surrender themselves to any religious leadership that seems to promise certitude, particularly when they can do this in the company of many others like-minded with themselves.

Turning now to that class of believers whose faith rests on some form of reasoning, we must admit that it bulks much more largely in the consciousness of the believers themselves than it is in actual fact. It has long been recognized by psychologists that there is a widespread tendency to account for belief on rational considerations when its real grounds are emotion, tradition, or the will to believe. It is a pardonable idiosyncrasy to think that we are following the guidance of our intellect when we are really in the power of quite other and less reputable forces. Thus when Professor Pratt finds that some 30 per cent. of his respondents assert that their faith rests on a reasoning process, he at once discounts the figures and admits that the evidence of the respondents themselves on a point like this is not to be trusted. At the same time there is no doubt that with certain types of mind intellectual considerations do count in framing and defending their beliefs. The stock arguments for the being of God, cosmological, ontological, teleological, and the like, however much they have been discredited in the philosophy of religion, have still a certain practical value for the plain man. He recognizes more or less consciously that, however great be the working value of his faith, and however strongly supported by experience, it needs also to be grounded in reason. He does not, perhaps, go so far as to think that he can give any logical demonstration of the existence of God, but he does like to feel that he can support his intuitions by reasoning, which to him, at any

rate, is sufficient. It is seldom that this amounts to more than a rough and ready rationalizing of his own native credulities, but the point is that he finds it sufficient for his own purposes and prides himself on it as an intellectual achievement. Such a mental attitude has a real psychological interest. However unsatisfactory the process may be from the standpoint of philosophy there is some significance in the evident but unconscious desire which men show to find a rational determination for their faith in God. This is illustrated by the whole history of religious thought which shows how beliefs, beginning in unthinking credulity, find it necessary to support themselves by argument, and in the process set up whole theological systems.

The third class of believers, viz. those who base their faith in God on sentiment, or on some form of the affective consciousness, is, according to Professor Pratt, the most numerous of all. Some 37 per cent. of his respondents claimed that their faith rested not on argument or authority but on the direct experience of the presence of God in their own souls. Terms like 'instinct', 'intuition', 'direct' and 'immediate' 'consciousness' are freely used by believers of this type. Readers of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* will realize how large a part this milder kind of mystic experience plays in all forms of religion. It varies greatly in degree of intensity from a conscious assurance of the presence of God in the soul to a dim notion that there must be some reality corresponding to one's religious impulses and desires. One man, for example, believes in the Bible because it finds him: another in the Church because its worship assures him of the reality of spiritual things: another in God because the idea answers his deepest cravings and brings him peace. This latter ground of faith has perhaps a wider appeal than any other. Men accept belief in God as a working hypothesis, and come to feel that it is true,

because it brings to them a sense of assurance and peace. The process is quite unreasoning, but they are content to trust their intuition.

Closely allied with this attitude of mind is that which bases faith in God on the will to believe. In Pratt's inquiry this represents the smallest class of believers being only 8 per cent. of the whole. But Pratt considers that this is certainly an understatement, because it is just this kind of ground for faith which the respondents would be least likely to recognize, and, if they did recognize it, would be least likely to confess. As we have already seen, however, there is no doubt as to its effectiveness and as to the force of its appeal to unthinking minds. It is probably just when it is most needed that it is least effective. There are not a few people who would gladly believe if they could, and whose ability to believe is in inverse proportion to the intensity of their desire. When they are able to view the matter dispassionately, and gauge the situation for themselves the fact that they wish to believe becomes a positive hindrance rather than a help. Even Freud, who argues that wish is always at the bottom of belief, has to admit that the fact of wishing is generally concealed from the believer. He unconsciously deceives himself by thinking that his belief is based on reason. He would at least not believe so readily did he know that his wish was father to the belief. A very striking illustration of the conflict between wish and reason in belief is the following confession of Father George Tyrrell. Writing of his conversion he says: 'I felt it would be Rome or nothing. I knew dimly that I had not any real *faith* in Rome—only a great wish that I could believe—a wish that some of the grosser obstacles were non-existent. I was tempted to do what I knew or suspected would be internally dishonest.' Later in his life he wrote again, 'Sometimes I think it must be

said that, in the deepest depths of my self-consciousness I believe nothing at all, and am myself deceived in the matter: and the recognition of the manner in which I have all along allowed the wish to believe to play upon me rather confirms this melancholy hypothesis.'<sup>1</sup> There is nothing singular about this attitude of mind, though it is seldom that it is so frankly recognized and criticized by the subject himself. The psychological condition to which it points has been made full use of in religious education and propaganda. By those concerned to induce belief in others it is clearly understood that their object is more than half achieved if they can bring about in the subject a wish for faith. This at once sets up an attitude of suggestibility and, by cultivating it and inducing the habit of voluntary attention, and inhibiting whatever is antagonistic, faith is encouraged to grow into certainty. Höffding puts the matter very clearly when he says:

'Belief and wish are near akin. The belief which cannot be proved is a wish that what we believe may be true. This wish may even lead to the discovery of the truth. The wish is of great importance in our spiritual economy because it is a form of holding fast to something that has value, even though this value can be realized neither at once nor some time hence, nor even in any measurable time. Such a wish may have negative as well as positive significance. It may exclude aims and actions which would be inimical to the value which lives in the wish. And it may sharpen the attention so that no possibility of taking a step in the direction of the realization of the valuable escapes our notice. More values are likely to be redeemed, discovered, and produced when we hold fast to the content of our wishes, than when a resignation devoid of wishes has set in, still less a state of satiety.'<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing illegitimate in the use indicated of the will to believe. For most of us it is a real stimulus to thought, and may be a help in the discovery of truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, vol. i, pp. 155, 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 340.



Kant was right when he said: 'Did we never exert our powers except in the assurance that the realization of the desired object lay within our capability, they would for the most part remain inactive.' In other words, the wish may be the father to the thought. The position, however, has its dangers, and amply illustrates the difficulties we have already noted as attending on the over-emphasis on any one faculty in connexion with the religious outlook. It is essential to maintain a due balance between the various mental processes and attitudes making for religious belief. All the different grounds of belief that we have seen in operation are important, and all have their function to perform. But among them the intellect has a co-ordinating and interpretative power which no other faculty can usurp. The proportion in which the four grounds of belief above referred to operate, varies greatly in different individuals from temperamental and other causes, but no religious faith is likely to endure that cannot be made conformable to reason. Values are important enough in their way, but a value judgement is in the long run an appeal to the reason, and, by the result of such an appeal, must stand or fall.

To sum up this inquiry into the psychological grounds of belief in God, we may say, in the first place, that such belief arises naturally from the working of man's religious impulses. He conceives the object of his belief in a more or less personal form and clothes it with the attributes of his humanity. Its form is anthropomorphic because it can be nothing else. Even in dealing with transcendental ideas man is compelled to think in human categories because no others are open to him. He quite justifiably gives play to his imagination, and among the various images which present themselves to his mind, he tends to select those which are most congruous with his needs and present the divine to him in the most intelligible and

useful forms. Further, as time goes on and religious experience deepens, ideas of God become fixed and take to themselves authority grounded in tradition or local custom. This, in Höffding's terms, involves a certain conservation of religious values which reacts on the mind of the believer, becomes a further incentive to faith, and fills out its content. This is seldom accepted quite blindly, but derives further support from instinct or from the feeling of dependence through which man's religious nature normally finds expression. In some cases this is a purely individual experience not easily communicable to others. But generally it finds for itself social sanctions and the influence of the herd instinct helps to impress and stereotype it. Finally, under the influence of a reflective process the conception of God is articulated and filled out and makes a definitely intellectual appeal. This generally establishes itself in a practical way in the form of cultus, and there is a good deal of truth in the dictum of Troeltsch that, 'Only by the faculty of establishing a cult does true religion declare itself.' The question whether cultus precedes belief or is the consequence of it is less important than the fact that belief expresses itself in this form as well as in purely intellectual terms. In both phases of it, however, we must recognize that belief involves an element of trust or self-committal and that it is this which gives to it its religious character. To believe in God is not merely to accept the fact of His existence as we would accept the truth of a mathematical proposition. It means also that we are prepared to act on such belief. In other words religious belief involves practice. Faith is known by works, and there is no radical opposition between the two. From the psychological standpoint this is important as showing that belief contains an element of conation, and cannot do its work without it. If we accept the definition that belief is 'the

acceptance of anything as true with such conviction as to compel trust and to generate loyalty', and apply this to man's attitude to God we reach a position in which the elements of feeling, will, and intellect are freely blended and balanced. As Principal Caird says :

'It is no valid objection to the endeavour after and rational knowledge of the contents of our religious belief, to say that the primary organ of spiritual knowledge is not reason but faith. That we must begin with intuition is no reason why we should not go on to scientific knowledge. The spontaneous and the reflective tendencies may coexist. Granting that the act of spiritual apprehension is quite different from intellectual assent, there is still a place left for reason in the province of religion. The science of acoustics is not meaningless because we can hear without it. We act before we reflect ; and religion must exist before it can be made the subject of reflective thought. But in religion, as in morality, art, and other spheres of human activity there is the underlying element of reason which is the characteristic of all the activities of a self-conscious intelligence.'

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

J. Jastrow, *Psychology of Conviction*, Boston, 1918.

Pratt, *Psychology of Religious Belief*, New York, 1907.

Gardner, *The Practical Basis of Christian Belief*, London, 1923.

Lang, *The Making of Religion*, London, 1898.

Wobbermin, *Der Christliche Gottesglaube*, Leipzig, 1911.

Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, Edinburgh, 1906.

## VII

### RELIGION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

THE study of cultus and worship inevitably raises the question as to the respective parts played by the individual and by society in religion. We may put aside at once the assumption that religion must be either individual or social. No doubt students of religion may be found who maintain one only of these positions to the exclusion of the other, but in the light of psychology they cannot be in any sense mutually exclusive. As we have already seen and shall have to maintain more at length later, the extreme sociological theories of the origin of religion do not sufficiently allow for the personal or individual equation, though at the same time to make religion a purely individualistic experience is even more unjustifiable. Religion then is ultimately both an individual and a social concern. But for the understanding of it it is of great importance to preserve the balance between, and assign their proper functions to, these two aspects of man's religious being. It is then the task of the psychology of religion to inquire as to what it is that man brings with him in the way of religious equipment, and what is contributed by the social environment. What we are concerned with is a special form of the general problem as to environment and heredity. We have to inquire more exactly than we have done yet how far man is by nature religious, and how far the social milieu is necessary to his religious development.

*The question*

We begin then with the individual. There is no doubt that the study of primitive religion gives some colour to

the suggestion that society is more important than the individual in the development of religious life and practice. It is true that among peoples of the lower culture the individual consciousness over against the group is very feebly developed, but as we ascend the scale of civilization the individual bulks more largely and his experience comes to have a value of its own. He cannot indeed exist as an isolated unit, self-centred and self-sufficient. In order fully to realize himself he needs the society of others like himself. In one respect of it, at any rate, personality is the power of entering into relations with other personalities, and it is entirely true that 'no man liveth unto himself'. We may agree then that 'a separate individual is an abstraction unknown to experience', but that will not justify us in sinking the individual in his surroundings or in treating him as though he had no existence apart from them. Man's development as a moral being is deeply influenced by his reactions to the society in which he finds himself, but for all that he cannot be regarded as nothing more than a cog in a machine. When Pascal said that man is greater than the universe, because, though the Universe can crush him, he knows that he is being crushed, he was only stating in a picturesque way the truth that man, as a free and intelligent being, is capable of shaping his circumstances as well as of being shaped by them. That, to an extent at any rate, man is 'the master of his fate and the captain of his soul', is an axiom of any real system of morals. From the point of view of psychology the process which culminates in this way begins with the distinction between the self and the world outside existing independently of the self. The dawn of self-consciousness in the child finds him a sensitive bodily organism over against a world continually acting upon it, whose actions are estimated by the effects they thus produce. By these contacts with the not-self the



consciousness of self is conditioned and through them it develops, and, as McDougall argues, it would probably remain very crude and rudimentary were the growing child confined to a purely physical environment without the companionship of human beings or animals. In spite, however, of the fact that the self-consciousness is moulded by contact and contrast with other selves it grows with the child's growth, and, in normally constituted human beings, becomes the ego conscious of its freedom, initiative, and responsibility. Among the most important influences in later life are those self-regarding sentiments whose exaggeration becomes a real moral danger, but whose normal functioning produces that proper self-respect which is one of the foundation stones of character.

In the endless discussions which have taken place on the meaning and value of human personality, the important contribution made by religious, especially by Christian thought, must not be overlooked. It is a commonplace that the teaching of Jesus Christ gave a new value to the individual, and probably originated a view of human personality very different from that held by pagan thinkers generally. But it is in Kant that we find the beginning of the modern philosophical treatment of personality. Starting from Descartes' maxim, 'Cogito ergo sum', and from the conception of individuality expounded by Leibniz as at once a differentiation from and a relation to the whole external Universe, Kant analysed self-consciousness as the power of separating oneself as the subject from oneself as the object—the power to say I am I. He further showed how this ego or conscious-self is the source of all knowledge, in virtue of its capacity for interpreting and unifying the multiplicity of the external world. On the moral side the power of self-determination constitutes the personality an end in itself and not a means to an end. For Kant, then, a person is a self-conscious and self-determining

individual. The moral life of man is intensely individualistic. He can because he ought. He stands alone under the obligation of the moral imperative.

Here, however, we are concerned not so much with the meaning and scope of individuality, as with its bearing on religion and the religious consciousness. Without going so far as Dr. McTaggart in his contention that not society but the individual is the end of social life, we may be permitted to observe that in modern discussions on religion the tendency is to lose the individual in the sociological aspects of the subject. This is no doubt a reaction from an earlier and intensely individualistic position, and the balance needs to be redressed. When Professor Royce<sup>1</sup> finds the expression of religion in the loyalty of the individual to the beloved community he is dealing with a process that has had a history and whose completeness depends quite as much on the training and attitude of the individual as on the action of the community upon him. It cannot be denied that for the full development of the individual, and in order to give him a sphere for this development the community is necessary. But the individual even, as a component part of it, is necessary too, and his place and function in the process is a legitimate object of investigation.

What then are we to say of the individual religious consciousness, and of the part played by the individual in the development of religion? Here anthropologists are deeply divided. They agree in general terms that the individual has to be reckoned with, but their unit is often the group and there is a growing tendency to submerge the individual in the group to which he belongs, and through which he obtains his religious standing. Yet Frazer and others are found to argue that in certain primitive forms of religion individual totemism precedes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*.

clan totemism, and even Durkheim admits that 'Every Ojibway has his own personal *manitou*, which he chooses for himself and to which he renders special religious services: the Melanesian of the Banks Islands has his *tamaniu*: the Roman his genius: the Christian his patron saint and guardian angel'.<sup>1</sup> There is no question that among totemistic peoples, individual totemism is a very frequent phenomenon. Whether it be prior to clan totemism or not is not a matter of very great importance, and it is probable that Frazer is incorrect in his assumption here. The point, however, is that among peoples whose group consciousness is very marked and practically dominates their whole religious practice, room is yet found for an individual type of religion that presumably has an importance of its own. This is evident not merely from the widespread character of individual totemism, but from the bearing of tribal custom on individual action and welfare. When a youth undergoes the painful and disgusting processes that mark his initiation, he is no doubt conforming to the tribal regulations and fitting himself for full participation in the life of the tribe. But he does so as an individual, and his individuality is often marked by assigning to him some special totemistic name or sign. The suggestion would seem to be that, if he gains much from his association with the tribe, he also has it in his power to make some contribution to it, and that it is *he* who makes such contribution. Durkheim, however, strongly maintains the opposite view, and his statement of it must be given in his own words:

'The existence of individual cults implies nothing which contradicts or embarrasses the sociological interpretation of religion: for the religious forces to which it addresses itself are only the individualized forms of collective forces. Therefore, even when religion seems to be entirely within the individual conscience, it is still in society that it finds

<sup>1</sup> *Elementary Forms*, p. 45.

the living source from which it is nourished. We are now able to appreciate the value of the radical individualism which would make religion something purely individual: it misunderstands the fundamental conditions of the religious life. If up to the present it has remained in the stage of theoretical aspirations which have never been realized, it is because it is unrealizable. A philosophy may well be elaborated in the silence of the interior imagination, but not so a faith. For before all else a faith is warmth, life, enthusiasm, the exaltation of the whole essential mental life: the raising of the individual above himself. Now how could he add to the energies he possesses without going outside himself? How could he surpass himself merely by his own forces? The only source of life at which we can morally reanimate ourselves is that formed by the society of our fellow beings: the only moral forces with which we can sustain and increase our own are those which we get from others.<sup>1</sup>

There is enough truth in this to give it a certain plausibility, especially in relation to the religions of peoples of the lower culture. But as we ascend in the scale of religious development the instances to the contrary become more numerous and striking, and show that the personal aspect of religion is very persistent and cannot be so easily explained away.

The history of religions supplies abundant evidence of the large part played in the development of the religious life and consciousness by the conviction on the part of the individual concerned that he is in direct communion with the God or spirit, and that such God or spirit has something to say to him and to him alone. On the borderland of religion and magic the medicine man or priest derives his influence and his livelihood from such conviction, and from the fact that it is shared by those who obtain the good or evil results of his special power of commerce with the unseen world. But this is always something special to himself. By it he is singled out from the crowd and given

<sup>1</sup> *Elementary Forms*, p. 425.

an individual position which he knows how to use to the full. The same thing is true of the private worshipper in many stages of religious development. He may be like Horace, 'Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens', and yet his relation to the gods has in it something private and individual. He may express it in forms consecrated by long usage and common to many others of his kind, but his aim in doing so is single and has to do with the intimacies of his own private life and interests. In prayer, for example, he is concerned to establish a relation with the divine, which is purely for his own ends, and to ask for boons which relate simply to himself and his needs. Conversion again is a purely individual process. Making all allowance for the influence of mass suggestion and the like, it constitutes an individual experience which each experient passes through for himself, and the forms of it differ with his personal idiosyncrasies and needs. The same may be said of many other aspects of the religious life in which the personal concern stands out pre-eminent. A good illustration of the point is found in Hinduism where the absorption in Karma and the unending wheel of existence begins by destroying individuality, but ends in emphatically reasserting it. We find this in the Vedanta philosophy which represents the reaction of the Hindu mind against the unending cycle of being in which men found themselves enclosed. Dr. Farquhar, for example, writes as follows of the process of liberation which began with the formulation of ideas concerning the Atman or self, and which he calls 'the greatest venture ever made by the Indian mind':

'By this experience the man was completely transformed. He had hitherto regarded himself as an individual living being in the multitudinous kingdom of nature, not so very different from the animals, dependent altogether on the things of time and of senses, hopelessly entangled in Karma and rebirth. He now realizes that that is all



a dream: that he is a spiritual being to whom all nature is but an empty show: an immortal being to whom fear, sorrow, and death, are meaningless: an eternal being for whom the changes of time are less than nothing: a self-sufficing spirit, requiring nothing and therefore desiring nothing: a universal being to whom individuality is but a speck: a free spirit far beyond the reach of the fetters of Karma, whether of past or of future actions. The experience has brought him such a joyous elevation of spirit that he can never fall to the old levels again. He knows himself the eternal God, present in all the universe, the sum and substance of all reality. He stands immortal, fearless, desireless, beyond the reach of pain, or sorrow, or doubt, his experience all ended, his soul filled with the blessedness of a great peace.<sup>1</sup>

It was this transforming experience that led to that renunciation of the world which is so pronounced a feature among Hindu saints. It made men Sannyasi or Renouncers, and Bhikshu or beggars. It led them to emphasize their individuality to the extent even of giving up their caste and so stepping outside the Hindu social order altogether. It involves an individual transformation and an individual dedication to the service of God of a very remarkable kind.

From this it is but a short step to other examples of individualistic religion such as are to be found all over the world. The pioneers in religion are generally men of a deep individual experience which cuts them off from their kind, and lifts them on to lonely pinnacles where only the strongest and best of them succeed in keeping their heads. Their teaching is generally regarded as heresy, and persecution and opposition tend to drive them in upon themselves. The prophets of the Old Testament afford most interesting cases in point. They all become prophets in response to a call of Yahweh addressed to them individually and potent enough to lift them out of the ruck of contemporary religion. Amos was no prophet,

<sup>1</sup> *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 224.

neither the son of a prophet, i.e. belonged to no guild or society of prophets, but the Lord took him from following the flock, and the Lord said unto him, 'Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.' He was given a message of his own which ran clean counter to the popular religious expectations of the time, and left him a voice crying in a wilderness. So Hosea out of the painful experiences of his own domestic life, read a new meaning into Yahweh's relation with his people, which enabled him to give a more ethical and personal interpretation of his will. The word of the Lord came unto him in such fashion that he could not gainsay it. Isaiah again had a vision of God that was altogether peculiar to himself. He saw the Lord, 'high and lifted up and his train filled the temple'. The vision brought home to him the sense of his own uncleanness, and then of the quickening and purifying power of God so that he was able to answer the call with a 'Here am I, send me'. Jeremiah too : in spite of an overwhelming sense of his own unworthiness, 'O Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child,' yet responded to the urgent personal call, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.' In all these cases the man himself was conscious of God's individual dealing with him. Each prophet was a man of his people and of his time, trained in the religious traditions of his race, and using the thought forms of his day. Yet in spite of this, under the stress of a deep personal experience he came out from the common crowd and stood alone. He endured persecution and reproach. He spoke a message which was not that which his people expected or wanted to hear. He was original in the best sense of the term and, single-handed, did the work of God for his day and generation. There is, therefore, no incongruity in calling Jesus Christ the last of the prophets. The supreme

authority with which He spoke was derived, not from tradition, as was the case with the scribes, but from His first-hand knowledge of His Father's mind and will. The formula, 'Ye have heard how it hath been said unto you by them of old time, but I say unto you,' struck the characteristic note of His preaching, and was the beginning of that solitary way which ended in the Cross. So every turning point in the history of Christianity is marked by the emergence of a man to whom had come some individual vision of God's truth and who could speak to the world or to the Church in the authentic personal tones of a prophet. These men stand out like lighthouses over the dull waters of convention and religious routine. They were mocked, derided, and persecuted, and many of them gave their lives for the truth as they saw it. But they vindicated for all time the right of the individual to a religious experience of his own, and they left as a legacy to mankind not merely the right but the duty of private judgement in the things of faith. They may have been, and often were, mistaken : sometimes they emphasized the personal note to the point of exaggeration ; but they have been the chief factors in religious progress, and the chief mediators of God's word to man. In the case of many of them their teaching was accepted, and what began with them as heresy became the orthodoxy of a later time. If then it lost its power of appeal, became stereotyped, and ultimately gave way before a wider vision, that fate only served to emphasize the fact that religious truth and life renew themselves best in the crucible of an individual experience. Such experience, however, may easily be overdone. Instances abound of religious individualism degenerating into egoism and producing even ego mania. It has its psychopathic side, and needs to be steadied, balanced, and controlled. Its danger is an excess of the emotional over the volitional and intellectual elements. As James says :

'We find that error by excess is exemplified by every saintly virtue. Excess, in human faculties, means usually one-sidedness or want of balance : for it is hard to imagine an essential faculty too strong, if only other faculties equally strong be there to co-operate with it in action. Strong affections need a strong will : strong active powers need a strong intellect : strong intellect needs strong sympathies to keep life steady. If the balance exist no one faculty can possibly be too strong—we only get the stronger all-round character. In the life of saints, technically so-called, the spiritual faculties are strong, but what gives the impression of extravagance proves usually on examination, to be a relative deficiency of intellect. Spiritual excitement takes pathological forms whenever other interests are too few and the intellect too narrow. We find this exemplified by all the saintly attributes in turn—devout love of God, purity, charity, asceticism, all may lead astray.'<sup>1</sup>

If, then, the individualistic type of religion sometimes produces an exaggerated self-consciousness and egotism it has in other cases exactly the opposite effect. The dominance of the idea of personal salvation leads to the adoption of very extreme measures to attain the desired end. Prominent among these is that form of self-surrender which expresses itself in asceticism of various kinds. Celibacy, solitude, fasting, and bodily tortures are all accepted willingly as means by which the self is perfected and eternal bliss secured. But the satisfaction which some natures can obtain by such means is not based merely on a calculation of benefits. There is a real pleasure derivable from ascetic experiences because they seem to contribute to the well-being and unification of the self. They heighten self-consciousness and bring about a sense of mastery and conquest which, while seeming to abase, really exalt the personality concerned. As Coe says :

'Asceticism has too great emotional power, too great attraction to be based on a mere calculation of benefits. There are direct instinctive factors also, and even an element of self-examination. Correlative to the instinct of

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 340.

→ mastery there is an instinct of submission that brings actual satisfaction in surrendering to an obviously more powerful being. It is as if by complete abnegation of self-will one became a sharer in the greatness of the master: he is placated, I become a part of his conquering retinue and thus, by having no will of my own, I gain significance.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, from whatever point of view it is regarded, asceticism seems to intensify individuality. It cuts its exponent off from the rest of mankind, sets him on a pedestal, and fills him with a sense of superiority. It puts him in a special relationship with his god or gods, and the severer the discipline he uses the surer is his expectation of reward and privilege. But the saintliness thus induced easily passes over into sanctimoniousness, and the end may be, and often is, a morbid type of self-conscious religiosity.

→ The same result is seen accruing from certain types of mysticism which emphasize the absorption of the self in deity. We have already had occasion to study mysticism from other points of view. It is of great importance for the general interpretation of the religious consciousness, but it is of no less importance for understanding certain very individual types of experience. Indeed, it may safely be argued that the whole mystic attitude to religion depends on a strong sense of the vital importance of the individual's relation to, and communion with, the Deity. The mystic has a direct vision of God communicated to himself alone, and in virtue of it he is able to mediate the things of God to others in a way that sets him apart from common men. We need not hesitate to accept the fact of such an individual religious consciousness, or to acknowledge its value for others. What we are concerned with for the moment is the psychological interpretation of this direct intuition of the divine, and its bearing on the religious life and development of the individual concerned. In the first place the mystical experience involves a consciousness of the

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of Religion*, p. 148.



presence of God as a personal being so intense and vivid as to react powerfully on the personality of him who experiences it. It involves a degree of awareness and attention that constitutes in itself a deep religious experience and has a real educational value. It produces a sense of calm, strength, and courage that brings with it the conviction that the subject concerned has reached his true self-hood and increases his self-reliance and self-respect. What he experiences is experienced by himself alone and is authenticated by and to him so that no confirmation from outsiders is needed. Pratt, for example, quotes the following from one of his correspondents, and it is a typical experience:

'At times God is very real to me. At each time He seems nearer and more real than any human being could be. At other times He seems real but more or less remote. There have been times in my life, beginning in early childhood, when I have believed myself to come consciously into the presence of God. Sometimes this has occurred when I have been in great sorrow or in great fear and dread. But sometimes I have felt His presence without any special reason for it—for example, when I have been alone out of doors or reading something which has touched me by its beauty and truth, I have felt a quick glad sense that He was near, "closer to me than breathing, nearer than hands or feet". Such experiences while they last make me feel that I have come to my true self. I seem to understand life better for them. They are accompanied by no emotional excitement, only by a deep peace and gladness. I have never spoken of them to any one. These experiences are not habitual with me, that is, they do not occur very frequently. They afford me my strongest ground for belief in God.'<sup>1</sup>

There can be no question as to the purely individual character of experiences such as these. They represent a personal, private, and unaided exercise of the religious consciousness, which for the experient at least is far more than merely subjective and tends to produce an over-

*Mystical  
Experience*

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 342.

whelming sense of the reality of that to which, or of Him to whom they point.

In the next place this is indicated by some of the moral and spiritual effects which are produced in such cases. The mystical experience carries with it a deep sense of certitude regarding God and the spiritual world. As Tauler says: 'The man who truly experiences the pure presence of God in his own soul knows well that there can be no doubt about it.' He realizes his own union with the divine, and the more he prays and meditates the more real does that union appear to him. He is in touch with a wider world than that of the senses, and his attention to it becomes a discipline by which it is verified. Psychology, of course, cannot justify this assurance. But it has to take note of it as one of the regular concomitants of the mystic temper of mind. Of its importance as a subjective vindication of the mystic attitude there can be no question, though it must not be pressed so far as to be taken for a proof of the reality of the experience involved. In other words, we cannot find here any psychological ground for the validity of the so-called argument from religious experience. That must be sought in other directions.

Another important manifestation of individual religious experience is to be found in the sense of sin and unworthiness which generally accompanies a vivid consciousness of the presence of God. In form this varies greatly in different religions and with different religious temperaments. In Eastern religions, notably in Hinduism and Buddhism, it often amounts to no more than a conviction of the evil of existence and a desire to escape from the eternal cycle in which individual existences are involved. Absorption in the divine is the end chiefly to be desired by mortals, and everything which hinders such a consummation is regarded as evil. In other religions this attitude takes the more definitely ethical form of a sense of the radical opposition

*Opticism  
Psychology*

between the finite and the infinite, and the soul seeks a harmony between the two to which sin or moral evil is the great hindrance. It is marked, further, by an intensely individual consciousness of evil as preventing the desired union. The God needs his worshippers, and they need him, and anything which comes between them stands, *ipso facto*, condemned. Thus in certain Babylonian hymns we find an individual consciousness of sin as keeping man apart from God, as real and vivid as that expressed in the 51st Psalm. Cf. the following :

'O my God, my transgressions are very great, very great my sins. I transgress and know it not. I wander on wrong paths and know it not. The Lord in the wrath of his heart has overwhelmed me with confusion. I lie on the ground and none reaches a hand to me. I am silent and in tears and none takes me by the hand. I cry out and there is none that hears me. I am exhausted, oppressed, and none releases me. My God, who knowest the unknown, be merciful. My Goddess, who knowest the unknown, be merciful. How long, O my God, How long, O my Goddess. Lord, thou wilt not repulse thy servant. In the midst of the stormy waters come to my assistance, take me by the hand.'

This is taken from a psalm entitled 'the complaint of the repentant heart'.

Again, from a hymn to Ishtar :

'I, thy servant, full of sighs, I call to Thee, whoever is beset with sin, his ardent supplication thou acceptest. If thou lookest on a man with pity that man liveth. Ruler of all, mistress of mankind! Merciful one to whom it is good to turn, who dost receive sighs.' 'Besides thee there is no deity to lead in righteousness. Kindly look on me, accept my sighs, speak, how long, and let thine heart be appeased. When, O Lady, will thy countenance turn on me? Even like doves I moan, I feed on sighs.'

About such expressions there is nothing of the group consciousness, nor does the experient blame himself because he has not discharged his obligations to society. What he is concerned with is not any failure to conform to pre-

scribed and customary ritual, but rather a breach in his private and personal relations with the God. 'Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.' The failure he deplors is strictly personal to himself, something between himself alone and the object of his worship. This is the more striking because it finds clearest expression in religions like Judaism where great stress is laid on ritual observances, and where the nation is regarded as the religious unit rather than the individual.

In the higher religions, and especially in certain forms of Christianity, the importance of the individual religious consciousness is very clearly recognized and is held to be quite compatible with a real desire for union with God on the one hand, and for religious fellowship with men on the other. Even in modern times the stress which is quite rightly laid on the social implications of religion is not allowed to obscure the need for the development of the religious personality. The soul's quest for God is a thing of individual interest and concern, even though it may only find its true fulfilment in the service of mankind.

Generally speaking, then, we may agree that individual or personal religion most frequently finds expression as a desire for salvation which is closely allied with self-realization or self-satisfaction. The experience involved is more or less intense and takes the form of a feeling of strain and a hope of release. The strain may be due to a sense of sin, to fear, or to a conflict between the self and the world, real or ideal. Religion comes in the form of confidence, unification, and power. The process followed may be either catastrophic or gradual, but is always followed by a sense of emergence into a larger and surer world and by the attainment of poise and peace. As Coe says :

'These facts are over simplified when religion is regarded simply as an instrument whereby society controls indi-

personal  
Salvation  
in  
Religion

viduals. Neither society nor the individual is a static thing, either controlled or controlling, but both are in process of forming themselves. In the merely general statement that religion is a social phenomenon, we leave unmentioned, on the one hand, the varieties of religious group, and on the other, the degrees and modes of individuality. To say that religion here and there represses individual action does not tell us enough: it is equally true that religion strengthens individuals against society. The whole truth is that religion has had a part in the entire evolution of both society and the individual.'<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following:

Löhr, *Socialismus und Individualismus* im A. T. Giessen, 1886.

Royce, *The World and the Individual*, New York, 1901.

Coe, *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, London and New York, 1902.

Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, Yale, 1918.

Lévy Bruhl, *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, Paris, 1910.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of Religion*, p. 140.



## VIII

### RELIGION AND SOCIETY

ONE of the most interesting developments of the study of religion in modern times is that which connects it with sociology and the theory of the group mind. We have had occasion already to notice some of the obvious implications of this point of view, many of which throw a good deal of light on certain religious phenomena. But the whole subject needs and demands closer investigation, and to this we must now turn. It is obvious to any careful student of religion that the individual religious consciousness has always to be reckoned with. But when due weight has been attached to it there still remains the fact that religion tends invariably to find for itself social expression, and becomes one of the chief factors in social and group life. The problem before us is as to the relation of these two tendencies, and the respective parts played by them in the expression and development of religious life and consciousness.

We have to do here with the adaptation of the herd instinct to religion. Man is a gregarious animal, and even in his civilized condition never quite loses his herd consciousness. Just as certain kinds of wild oxen cannot endure to be separated from the herd and show every sign of mental agony till they are united with it again, so man is always conscious of living a maimed and stunted life if he is kept in isolation from his kind. Solitary confinement is to most people an exquisite form of torture. So man's tendency to associate with his fellows is, as we shall see,

specially marked in religion. Hence a writer like Trotter in his *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* inclines to found religion altogether on the herd instinct. Though there is no real evidence for any such sweeping conclusion as this there can be no question that we have in the herd instinct a very powerful factor in religious development.

The question has been brought to the front in a very definite and challenging form by the group of French writers gathered round the *Année Sociologique*, notably MM. Durkheim and Lévy Bruhl, and Hubert and Mauss. Their general aim is to substitute the sociological approach to religion for the psychological, or to interpret religion in purely sociological terms. Their theories have been ably criticized by Professor Clement Webb in a previous Wilde Lecture entitled *Group Theories of Religion*.<sup>1</sup> With this we shall deal later, but meanwhile it is necessary to note the advances which have recently been made in social psychology, and their bearing on the operation of the religious consciousness. The older and rather vague conception of society as an organism possessing ends and a character of its own, and expressing itself in a collective consciousness, which somehow comprises the consciousness of all the individuals in the group, has now been modified in favour of the assumption of a group mind defined as follows :

‘ No permanent group, permanently organized for a durable object, can be regarded as a mere sum of persons, whose union, to have any rights or duties, must receive a legal confirmation. Permanent groups are themselves persons, group persons, having a group will of their own and a permanent character of their own ; and they have become group persons of themselves, without any creative action of the State. In a word group persons are real persons ; and just because they are so and possess such

<sup>1</sup> Cf. esp. Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*, Lévy Bruhl's *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, and Hubert and Mauss ‘ Esquisse d'un Théorie Générale de la Magie ’ in *L'année Sociologique*, vol. vii.

attributes of persons as will and character, they cannot have been made by the State.'<sup>1</sup>

The group as such, is thus something more than the sum of individuals composing it. It has a character of its own, though not necessarily a consciousness. There is such a thing as a group mind resulting from the co-ordination of a number of individual minds, made by them and yet dominating and directing them. Before this can happen, however, and in order to constitute such a group, something more is needed than a mere congeries of individuals. There must be some common end, aim, impulse, or sentiment, beyond the fact of proximity in space or simple association, in order to turn a collection of individuals into a group or crowd with a mind of its own. For example, the crowd at Piccadilly Circus on any given day is not a crowd in the psychological sense at all, but merely a number of human beings all of whom are bent on their own ends, and so entirely detached from one another. But let an accident happen, or some procession pass by, and the mass of isolated units becomes one through having its attention directed to the same end, or its emotions excited in the same way. The crowd will then act and feel, and express itself together. In so doing it becomes an entity or super-individual. As such it may give expression to its ideas or feelings in ways which probably no individual of those which compose it would regard as justifiable for himself, and of which he would of his own initiative be hardly capable. In this way the crowd in question may be said to have a group mind, and to be different from the units composing it. Its collective sentiment will react powerfully on the individuals concerned, directing both their thought and actions. The bearing of all this on religion is obvious. However great

<sup>1</sup> E. Barker, *Political Thought in England*, p. 175. Quoted by McDougall, *The Group Mind*, p. 19.

the importance we attach to the religious experience of the individual, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that such experience is profoundly influenced by association with others. Among peoples both of the lower and the higher culture associations for religious ends are very common, and must be regarded as an essential element in religious thought and practice. The exact part which such associations play in this development and their reactions on individual religious conduct have yet to be investigated.

Perhaps the best introduction to this task will be to examine more fully the sociological theory of religion put forward by Durkheim and his French collaborators. We may begin then with Durkheim's well-known definition: 'A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e. things set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them.'

*Durkheim*

This may be regarded as an expansion of an earlier statement to the effect that, 'The phenomena which we call religious are those which consist in obligatory beliefs connected with definite practices relating to objects given in these beliefs'. On these ideas a very interesting commentary may be found in the words, 'At bottom the concept of totality, that of society and that of divinity, are very probably only different aspects of the same notion.'<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the net result of Durkheim's argument is to substitute society for what is generally known as God. It is in society that religious ideas and aims are objectified and become real. M. Lévy Bruhl, on the other hand, resolves religious ideas into 'collective repre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. with this Leuba's statement, 'There is no question but that humanity idealized and conceived as a manifestation of creative energy possesses surpassing qualifications for a source of religious inspiration' (*Psychological Study of Religion*, p. 335).

sentations' which belong to a pre-logical type of mentality peculiar to peoples of the lower culture. This is so different from the mentality of modern and more highly cultured peoples that these must be assumed to have outgrown, not merely these primitive religious representations, but religion itself. Now it is quite true that we know but little of the mentality of primitive races of mankind, but there is no evidence of the supposed profound difference between it and our own mentality. Such difference as is indicated is only that which naturally subsists between the rudimentary and the more perfect. A child thinks as a child, but its thought forms are those of an adult only elementary, not essentially other in kind. The crude religious ideas of primitive peoples persist as mankind develops, only taking to themselves more refined and rational expression. They cannot be put down to a form of collective representation which experience tends to outgrow.<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that we must recognize to start with that the influence of the group mind on religion, though real and very effective, does not necessarily involve any of these extreme explanations. That religion is a social phenomenon goes without saying. But it is equally obvious that this is only one of its numerous characteristics, and cannot be regarded as giving a sufficient explanation of all its many-sided developments. As has already been pointed out, it is equally clear that it is an individual manifestation, but even as such profoundly influenced by social considerations. Just how and where and to what extent this influence makes itself felt is the problem before us.

Quite independently of the French sociologists Professor Robertson Smith stated the problem in his own way as follows: Among primitive peoples, generally speaking,

<sup>1</sup> See the very conclusive criticism of Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim in Professor Webb's *Group Theories of Religion*.



'a man did not choose his religion or frame it for himself: it came to him as part of the general scheme of social obligations and ordinances laid upon him as a matter of course by his position in the family and in the nation. Individual men were more or less religious, as men now are more or less patriotic. i.e., they discharged their religious duties with a greater or less degree of zeal according to their character and temperament: but there was no such thing as an absolutely irreligious man. A certain amount of religion was required for everybody; for the due performance of religious acts was a social obligation in which every one had to take his share as a member of the family or of the state.'<sup>1</sup>

This raises at once the vexed question of the difference between the psychology of the individual *per se* and the individual as a member of a group. Freud inclines to find the cause of this difference simply in the bond which unites individuals into a group. Le Bon, on the other hand, points to a kind of racial subconsciousness in which differences between individuals become obliterated, and a homogeneous average emerges possessing a new character of its own. The reason for this he finds in three distinct factors which he describes as follows:

'The first is that the individual forming part of a group acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts, which, had he been alone, he would perforce have kept under restraint. He will be the less disposed to check himself from the consideration that, a group being anonymous and in consequence irresponsible, the sentiment of responsibility, which always controls individuals, disappears entirely.' 'The second cause, which is contagion, also intervenes to determine the manifestation in groups of their special characteristics, and at the same time the trend they are to take. Contagion is a phenomenon of which it is easy to establish the presence, but that it is not easy to explain. It must be classed among those phenomena of a hypnotic order, which we shall shortly study. In a group every sentiment and act is contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of the Semites*, p. 24.

interest to the collective interest. This is an aptitude very contrary to his nature, and of which a man is scarcely capable except when he makes part of a group.' 'A third cause, and by far the most important, determines in the individuals of a group special characteristics which are quite contrary at times to those presented by the individual. I allude to that suggestibility of which, moreover, the contagion mentioned above is only an effect.'<sup>1</sup>

Le Bon goes on to show how these various factors lead to purely automatic action on the part of the individuals who are members of a group. They tend to decline in the scale of civilization and to yield unquestioningly to their more primitive instincts. Groups, therefore, are largely swayed by the unconscious, and are impulsive, fickle, and irritable. They are always open to influences of a hypnotic kind and are credulous and easily led. They intensify every emotion and readily go to extremes. They follow their chosen leaders like sheep a bell-wether. They are always open to the appeal of sentiment, seldom to that of reason. With this characterization McDougall agrees so far as it refers to the simple unorganized crowd, i.e. the kind of crowd that dominated Paris in the days of the revolution. Such a crowd, he says,

'is excessively emotional, impulsive, violent, fickle, inconsistent, irresolute, and extreme in action, displaying only the coarser emotions and the less refined sentiments; extremely suggestible, careless in deliberation, hasty in judgement, incapable of any but the simpler and imperfect forms of reasoning; easily swayed and led, lacking in self-consciousness, devoid of self-respect and of sense of responsibility, and apt to be carried away by the consciousness of its own force, so that it tends to produce all the manifestations we have learnt to expect of any irresponsible and absolute power. Hence its behaviour is like that of an unruly child or an untutored passionate savage in a strange situation rather than like that of its average member, and in the worst cases it is like that of a wild beast, rather than like that of human beings.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Crowd*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *The Group Mind*, p. 45.

These low characteristics, however, are much less prominent, and may altogether disappear in the case of highly organized groups or crowds. Here where we have individuals consciously forming permanent organizations for definite ends, there is to be found a group psychology much more closely allied to that of the higher type of individual. They show, according to McDougall, a common conation or collective will which is at once their bond of union and their ground of action. Freud, on the other hand, finds the ground of unity in a common *libido*, a desire or love directed towards certain ends or persons. On either showing, however, the individual in such an organized group will act, and will be subject to influences, in a different fashion from anything that would obtain were he isolated and alone.

There is a very striking resemblance between the phenomena of crowd contagion and those of hypnosis, and the underlying psychological conditions are probably the same in both cases. In hypnosis we have a condition in which attention is closely fixed on some one idea or object to the exclusion of all others. All our ordinary ideas and sensations are in a state of suspension, and one alone is to the front. Hence the extraordinary condition of suggestibility which is thus induced. In the crowd the attention of the individuals composing it is fixed for the time on certain ideas and objects for which the crowd stands, and so by the same process as in hypnotism suggestibility is greatly increased. In both cases the critical faculty is temporarily suspended and a state of mental quiescence is induced, so that ideas can be insinuated which under ordinary conditions would find little or no foothold. It is this which accounts for the readiness with which unnatural and incongruous actions are performed or consented to in both cases.

The bearing of all this on religion is obvious and signi-

ficant. For one thing it helps to explain how it is that 'Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum'. Though it may not be fair, perhaps, to put down all religious excesses, persecutions, and the like to the vagaries of the group mind, there can be no doubt that we have here one of the chief causes of them. Recognizing as we must that religion is one of the most powerful factors in shaping human conduct, we can then hardly exaggerate the force of its appeal to the collective consciousness. With the crowd, whether organized or unorganized, the religious motive is always powerful and calls forth the deepest emotions and instincts of our nature. As may be expected, therefore, there is a collective religious consciousness which exhibits all the traits of the group mind. The best illustrations of this are to be found in religious ceremonies where the influence of mass suggestion is brought into play. We have already had occasion to note the function of the crowd in primitive religious rites. There are innumerable instances of ceremonials which depend for their due performance on crowd contagion and the excitement engendered thereby. By sharing in the frenzied shouts and dances of the religious group, individuals are easily moved to action which they would hardly contemplate in isolation, and many of the baser kind of religious practices have to be worked up to in this way. The same phenomenon may be observed in certain forms of Christianity in connexion with religious revivals of the more emotional kind. Here we see the working of the group mind, as it were, naked and unashamed. There is, to begin with, a high state of suggestibility in the ordinary revivalistic meeting. Men and women come together in a mood of expectancy and ready to have their feelings played upon. Generally they are not disappointed. They are subjected to stirring emotional appeals which become almost hypnotic in the strength of their suggestion. These

are enforced by singing and prayer, till the whole meeting seems to have one mind and to move at the bidding of one impulse. The higher ranges of nervous discharge are inhibited and the lower given full play. A single case of confession is the signal for scores of others, and men and women stream up to the mercy seat or inquiry room like a flock of sheep. In many cases the whole gathering is moved to express its emotions outwardly in forms that are frequently near akin to madness. Singing, shouting, dancing, and the wildest bodily contortions, which end sometimes in epileptic or cataleptic states, are all common. Now it would be quite impossible for the individuals composing such a gathering to be affected in this way by themselves. The whole thing comes from crowd suggestion, and illustrates the immense force of it when it takes a religious form. At the same time we must not be betrayed into assuming, as some writers on the subject have done, that the psychology of the crowd is essentially different from that of the individual. Nor need we have recourse to the operation of a supposed instinct of imitation to account for the vagaries of crowds. In the crowd the individual remains what he has always been, but his suggestibility is greatly increased, the power of his native inhibitory tendencies and especially his sense of responsibility is lessened, and there is an intensification of attention on some central object or idea. One at least of the influences which tend to bring about this condition is purely physical. There is no doubt that the contact with other bodies and the cramping of one's movements which the pressure of the crowd produces, brings about a sense of helplessness and of lack of freedom which at once increases suggestibility and breaks down inhibitions. At the same time the individual becomes conscious of being an item in something much bigger than himself, so that with the loss of the sense of responsibility there comes an



increased sense of power, and the feeling that the crowd can do what it likes, and that he, the individual, will be justified in following suit. All this makes it obvious that the psychological effects of religious revivalism may be good or bad, and that the issue depends not so much on psychological considerations as upon the end kept in view. Generally speaking the dominance of the crowd over the individual is a thoroughly bad thing if it increases his suggestibility to the point where he loses his freedom of thought and of initiative, and if it succeeds in inhibiting his rational processes. When the revivalist sets himself to increase the credulity of his hearers he can certainly do so ; but he is only justified in doing it when that which he asks them to believe is really true and good. To induce what psychologists call the faith state may be a very great and wonderful thing if the object of faith is worthy, i.e. God or Christ. But if the object of faith is some impossible plan of salvation or some obsolete theology, then the subject of it will find that he has been building his house upon the sand. The real evil of much popular revivalism is not so much in the methods adopted as in the fact that it tends to induce belief in outworn dogmas, or in religious ideas which would not stand the test of calm thinking. It cannot be too often repeated that if religion is to hold men and work for their uplifting, it must appeal to the whole man, and satisfy his reason as well as his conscience and his heart. A religious appeal which begins by trying to inhibit this faculty or that can never be successful or lasting.

Further, the danger of crowd contagion is as great on the side of action as on that of belief. It is the aim of the revivalist to induce in his hearers some form of action which will definitely commit them. To this end their native shyness, or sense of propriety, or even sense of decency must be inhibited. This is effected by working

up emotion to the pitch which makes the individual forget his normal self and leaves him at the mercy of crowd suggestion. In some cases he is led simply to come forward and make public confession of his sins, which may be good both for himself and others. In more extreme cases he is induced to sing, dance, jerk himself, cry, shout, bark like a dog, and show all the signs of incipient dementia. There may, of course, be cases where experiences of this kind produce a moral catharsis which has good results. But the method is a very dangerous one and often ends in complete mental aberration. At the same time it is only fair to quote the testimony of Jonathan Edwards who certainly had abundant experience of the more extreme type of revivalism. He writes, 'The unavoidable manifestations of strong religious affection tend to a happy influence on the minds of bystanders, and are found by experience to have an excellent and endurable effect, and so to contrive and order things that others may have opportunity and advantage to observe them has been found to be blessed as a great means to promote the work of God.'<sup>1</sup>

So far we have been dealing with the unorganized religious group. When we come to religion as organized in a Church, or standing religious community, we are confronted with a very interesting and not dissimilar psychological situation. We have seen already how strong are the social tendencies in religion. Religious ideas and rites are from the first most closely bound up with man's social organism and welfare. Associations for religious purposes are among the most ancient of human institutions, and in their simpler as well as in their more elaborate forms have exercised a profound influence on the development of the race. These associations show all the characteristics of the group mind. Beginning with the fixation of attention on certain central ideas or objects, they work by suggestion

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion*, p. 260.

and inhibition until the individual often becomes as wax in their hands. However fine the objects which they set before them, they can only be attained by a method of mental and moral enslavement which is very difficult to justify. What McDougall says of the Roman Church is true of most religious organizations, viz. that 'in building up her vast organization she has recognized the limitations and frailties of the human mind and has not scorned to adapt herself to them in order to overcome them'.<sup>1</sup> The religious society works on the mind and character of the individual by a cumulative process of suggestion which may be made almost irresistible and used for legitimate or illegitimate ends. It has at its disposal the force of custom and tradition, and it makes the most of them. As we have already had occasion to note, religion is intensely conservative of its rites, ceremonies, and sacred customs, and Churches universally rely on the appeal of the familiar to eye and ear and mind. They obtain their hold over children at an early age, and easily fit them into a mould which they will find it hard to break. In their training of the young they rely chiefly on authority, and they often fail to realize that its use is limited, and that it is only of value as it prepares the way for freedom both of thought and action. In many Churches the last thing that is wanted is freedom of thought. Only as men and women accept the recognized dogmas and conform to the customary rites can they be regarded as true and loyal members. The result is that these Churches themselves tend more and more to be conservative and to impose on all their adherents the customary traditions and ideas. How tenacious these are is shown by the way in which the forms of them persist even when the substantive ideas they express have ceased to win credence. They can appeal to a law of habit which retains its power through

<sup>1</sup> *The Group Mind*, p. 93.

constant inhibitions and suggestions to which men only too readily submit themselves.

On the other hand, the power of religion is nowhere so strikingly manifested as in the fact that individuals or groups of individuals do at times break the chains of tradition and custom and emancipate themselves from the Churches so far as to strike out a line of their own. Something analogous to prophets and prophetism and various other forms of mystical religious experience is to be found in all religions, when men hear the divine voice speaking in authentic accents to themselves and calling them out of the customary grooves. That men should listen and obey and take their stand against authority and vindicate their right to freedom of thought and speech even at the cost of everything they hold dear and possibly of life itself, is a not infrequent phenomenon even in organized religion. It witnesses to the originality and independence of the religious consciousness, and has been in history one of the constant factors in religious progress. At the same time it has to be confessed that the heresy of one age easily becomes the orthodoxy of the next. The shades of the prison house of convention soon close round the religious reformer and innovator, and the traditional temper reasserts its sway. This has been the history of nearly all religious movements of the past. It again witnesses to the power of the religious association which is capable of absorbing new truth and bringing it under the domination of its authority, until sometimes the last state is worse than the first. In some of the religious movements of the Middle Ages we have remarkable instances of revolt against traditionalism and orthodoxy carried out, not by prophetic individuals, but by groups. Such, for example, were the Waldenses, the Beguines, the Lollards, the Friends of God, and the Brethren of the Common Life. As might be ex-

pected, they are all more or less mystical in their apprehension of religion, and this attitude by itself is probably enough to account for their independence and for the courage with which they broke away from conventions. These 'poor men' were in most cases before their time, but the movements they represent witness, just as surely as do the lives of great prophetic individuals, to the inherent vitality of the religious impulse, and to its ultimate independence of the forms and restrictions imposed on it by the community. There is a great deal of truth in Machiavelli's words: 'All religions must be again and again rejuvenated by a return to their original principle. Christianity would have become entirely extinct had not St. Francis and St. Dominic renewed its life and kindled it afresh in the hearts of men by their imitation of Jesus Christ. They saved religion, but they destroyed the Church.' This is perhaps an extreme statement, but it represents facts which cannot be ignored. Again and again in the history of organized religion it has happened that men have revolted against the Church because of its conservatism, immobility, and consequent lifelessness. They have cut themselves free and sought to take up a purely individualistic position. But circumstances, or human nature, have proved too much for them, and they have been driven back again into some form of organization or fellowship, or their movement has remained impotent and barren. Man is a social animal, and in religion as in other issues of life seeks to give corporate expression to his feelings and needs. It is in fellowship that he can best express himself and carry out his ideals into action. What Professor Royce calls loyalty to the beloved community is one of the strongest incentives that he knows, and so wherever religion is vital and active there will be something corresponding to a Church. But to say that it is man's nature to give social expression to his religious impulses



is not to find the object of religion in this expression. It is not that the sacred society or Church becomes or takes the place of a God, but rather that man finds that he can best approach his God as he does so in fellowship with others, as a member of a community which exists to secure the ends for which the God stands.

This point is important in view of the conclusions which the French sociological theory of religion seems to make inevitable. Professor Webb is undoubtedly right when he concludes that these theories allow no place for the religion of the individual, and in effect resolve religion into one among many means which serve social ends. Speaking of Durkheim's later view of religion as a social consciousness which represents things not as they are but as one would wish them to be for certain social purposes, he says :

'Such a view must find in religion an illusion. Now it is, no doubt, possible to take the view that though religion is thus an illusion, it is not one the disappearance of which is to be expected or even desired. Relegated from the sphere of science and of practice to the sphere of imagination and of art, it must have, so it may be held, an abiding place among the treasures of the human spirit. In this way it may be allowed to be an individual possession. Indeed, imagination and art may be regarded and often are regarded as being, although no doubt socially conditioned and socially valuable, yet as pre-eminently the sphere in which a matured individuality will express itself, and wherein it will least tolerate social interference or regulation. The frequent connexion between artists and unconventionality is a sign of something profoundly characteristic of the imaginative life. There are some for whom a religious mysticism, free from moral or intellectual intolerance and from social or political ambition, can claim the respect due to all forms of individual self-experience, while religious dogmas which pretend to scientific value, religious institutions which pretend to impose obligations can only be regarded as superannuated survivals in a civilization whose philosophy and polity have become universally "lay".'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Group Theories of Religion*, pp. 165, 166.

This, no doubt, gives fairly enough the outcome of the general view of religion in the *Année Sociologique*, but it is not necessarily the result of every group theory of religion. The individual element in religion is practically indestructible, and its social end and activity may be regarded as helping rather than hindering or swamping its individual manifestations. One effect of the group interest and the group mind is to modify the actions of individuals composing the group in conformity with the ends for which the group exists. This tendency certainly operates in religious groups, though it may have the effect of intensifying rather than deadening the religious consciousness of the individual. Generally speaking, however, the opposite of this is the case. The real danger and drawback of all collective action is its cramping effect on initiative and individuality. A marked example of this is to be found in our great modern industrial communities, where life and work are very highly organized and the individual tends to become a mere cog in the machine. The result is a definite loss of individual efficiency. In some modern industrial organizations this has not merely been accepted as a fact but urged as a policy. The latter, however, is only made possible by the former. The so-called 'ca' canny' system is strictly a product of the group mind, and would be inconceivable apart from it. So in religious associations the tendency is to reduce the rank and file to one dead level. Membership in the group is sometimes allowed to stand for everything, and mass suggestion easily induces an unthinking acceptance of ideas which the unaided reason would not be prepared to receive. Nothing can excuse any such suspension of our rational faculties. As we have urged again and again religion belongs to the whole man. Feeling, intellect, and will all have their part to play in it. Any religious group which works by the inhibition of any of these faculties,

must so far be regarded as working illegitimately, and is doing no real service either to man or to religion. Fr. Tyrrell is right when he says, 'The legitimate end of institutionalism is to reproduce the traditional and common type of religion in the individual soul; and this not by way of violent insertion from the outside, but by stimulating and guiding the natural process of spiritual growth.'

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, Leipzig, 1909.

Ginsburg, *The Psychology of Society*, London, 1921.

Codlay, *Human Nature and the Social Order*, New York, 1902.

Wallas, *The Great Society*, New York, 1914.

Troeltsch, *Die Sociallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*,  
Tübingen, 1911.

## IX

### THE RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

THOUGH the religion of children has been a subject of investigation for many years, it cannot be said that we have any accurate or scientific knowledge regarding it. In the very nature of the cause this must be so. To the adult inquirer the child mind is a closed book which does not easily open. Those who have the best opportunities for investigation, viz. parents and teachers, are often not free from bias of some kind, and the result is that child psychology tends to become both mechanical and doctrinaire. It has been questioned, indeed, whether at best it can supply us with any information of real value in regard to the development of religion. However this may be, it is certain that too much has been expected from it, and those who study the religious ideas of early childhood with the hope of proving anything as to the intuitive or necessary character of religion, are doomed to disappointment. The fact is that anything like the strictly scientific temper of mind is very difficult to maintain in the study of child-life. The temptation is to put a halo round the heads of subjects, to believe that 'heaven lies about us in our infancy', and that the age of innocence has in it something peculiarly favourable to religion. Unfortunately, this is not so. The young child is simply a young animal. His behaviour is largely instinctive. He is very dependent on his environment, and apt to react to it along well defined lines. The study of the rise and development of the ordinary human

instincts, and their modification under varying surroundings, is the proper business of the psychologist; and in dealing with children, whether individually or in the mass, this study brings him sooner or later face to face with the problem of religion in a very rudimentary form. In other words, the motivation of religion can be traced to generic tendencies of human nature, and these function in early childhood.

In dealing with this subject we may recognize at the outset that the same factors which we have found operative in the beginning of religion generally, are also operative in the religion of child life. It is not a question of discovering a primitive religious instinct, but rather of watching certain ✓ common instincts working out in a religious way and to religious ends. With children, as with primitive peoples, we have to reckon with the immense power of heredity, tradition, family environment, suggestion, and the propensity to imitation. As we shall see, one or other of these factors or some combination of them, is probably responsible for every external manifestation of religion among children. But behind them there lies something which, though they may shape it, they do not create, and may without exaggeration be dignified by the name of a rudimentary religious consciousness. All the available evidence goes to show that the normal child easily and instinctively reacts to ✓ religious associations and suggestions. Children seem to find some response in themselves to religious ideas, even though they may be beyond their intellectual apprehension, and come to be expressed in crude and even grotesque forms. Here, again, there is a marked similarity with the rudimentary religious phenomena of the primitive cults.

In the early stages of mental development suggestion plays a very important part and seems to prepare the way for the ready acceptance of certain religious impressions by the child mind, or rather religious suggestions come to



natures ready to receive them. To children, as to primitive men, the external world is by no means what it seems. It is a place of wonder and mystery, full of strange voices and peopled by unseen powers. Everything is alive. Dolls and toys can speak and act like living things. Pet animals are almost human and inanimate things generally are easily invested with the powers and qualities of life. In play the world is peopled with unseen beings, and make-believe has a serious reality. There is, therefore, to the mind of the child nothing strange about the idea of angels and spirits and of a God unseen but all-seeing. These easily fit into their scheme of things, and, generally speaking, they believe what they are told about them. This does not prove, as is sometimes claimed, that the idea of God is native to the child mind. All we can infer from it is that nascent mental processes are such that children readily make room for such an idea when it is suggested. They then go on to expand and clothe it in ways easily determined by teaching and environment. The naïve anthropomorphism of a child's religion only shows that his mind works in this region as it does in all others, through pictures, images, and fantasies, suggested by his everyday experiences. All we can claim is that in our earliest years the ground may be prepared for the more advanced and spiritual religion of maturity. Though that this is not necessarily so we shall see later, when we come to consider how complete is the break with early religious ideas and impressions which often takes place at the time of adolescence.

Turning now to the instinct of fear we need not hesitate to attribute to it a very considerable importance in the mental development of children, and some influence at least in shaping their religious ideas. We have seen how among primitive peoples, fear of the unknown and the unusual leads quite naturally to awe and worship. With children, darkness, shadows, the uncanny, and the un-

accustomed excite the most lively apprehensions, but their religious bearing is very doubtful. R. L. Stevenson puts the child's attitude in his own inimitable way :

Now my little heart goes beating like a drum  
With the breath of the Bogie in my hair ;  
And all around the candle the crooked shadows  
come  
And go marching along up the stair :  
The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of the  
lamp,  
The shadow of the child that goes to bed—  
All the wicked shadows coming tramp, tramp, tramp,  
With the black night overhead.

Most of us can remember the time when the feeling that these words express was only too familiar. It no doubt represents the attitude of mind which later on makes religious awe possible, and also gives point to the disciplinary forms in which religion is too often presented to the child mind. When ignorant teachers use the sanction of fear and appeal to God's anger and readiness to punish, they ✓ find some response in natures already accustomed to the contemplation of the fearful. The miseries caused by this process, especially when carried to extremes, can hardly be exaggerated. This, however, is not proper to the child's natural development. Among normal children, uncontaminated by the morbid ideas of their elders, one of the first effects of fear is curiosity. The child instinctively tries to familiarize itself with the strange object or experience and the familiarity breeds not contempt but confidence and friendliness. It has, for example, often been noticed that children are very interested in the devil and by no means inclined to accept the descriptions given of him by older people. They are rather sorry for him and would like to see him reformed, and are quite inclined to be ✓ friendly with him, without in any way approving of his character or condoning his supposed offences.

Further, children are as prone to mimicry as monkeys, and their imitative faculty finds full scope in the externals of religion. Anything solemn, orderly, and formal appeals to them irresistibly, and at a very early age they will be found reproducing all the actions and attitudes of adults in worship and religious ceremonial. Witness the small girl who rebuked her smaller brother for not 'smelling his hat' when he went into church. So the ritual of religion is a favourite subject for games. Services, marriages, and baptisms are all carried through with immense solemnity and careful attention to detail. Of course there is nothing really religious in all this, but it may very well be that it bears the same relation to the nascent religious consciousness that playing with dolls does to the maternal instinct, or playing with soldiers to the instinct of pugnacity. In any case there is no doubt that children easily receive religious impressions through the eye and ear, though at first, probably, they do not go much deeper. They are, however, particularly sensitive to crowd infection, and boys especially respond to appeals to loyalty and obedience. They will observe the good form recognized by their fellows at almost any cost. Indeed, their unthinking acceptance of form often turns it into a tyranny from which it is very difficult to escape. Girls are said to be less influenced by the herd instinct, but respond more readily to affection. Their loyalty is to a beloved individual rather than to a beloved community, and the *schwärmerei* which they often develop for a teacher or friend may work out later in a not very healthy type of religious emotionalism. Generally speaking, it would appear that religion is something external to the child rather than of its inner life. One of the features of normal religious development is a transfer of emphasis from the outer to the inner.

When we come to the problem of the growth of the moral consciousness in children and its relation to religion,

many difficult questions arise. The first necessity is to clear our minds of pre-conceptions. Young children are not naturally depraved on the one hand, nor, on the other, are they to be regarded as in a state of angelic innocence. While there is good evidence that they love order and have a keen sense of justice and even of right and wrong, there is no doubt that the earliest efforts to restrain them meet often with fierce resentment and resistance. The truth is that they are still at the level of the animal. They seek at all costs the satisfaction of their appetites, and object strongly and even passionately to all attempts at curbing them. As Professor Sully says:

‘Evolution will no doubt help us to understand much of this. If the order of development of the individual follows and summarizes that of the race, we should expect the child to show a germ at least of the passionateness, the quarrelsomeness of the brute, and of the savage, before he shows the moral qualities distinctive of civilized man. . . . The child at birth and for a long while after, may be said to be the representative of wild, untamed nature, which it is for education to subdue and fashion into something higher and better. At the same time the child is more than this. In the first clash of his will with another’s he knows more than the brutes sensual fury. He suffers consciously, he realizes himself in antagonism to a world outside him. . . . This consciousness reaches a higher phase when the opposing force is distinctly apprehended as another will. Self-feeling, a form of the feeling of “my worth”, enters into this early passionateness and differentiates it from a mere animal rage.’<sup>1</sup>

There is thus abundant evidence that at a very early stage in child life the primitive instincts of anger and insubordination begin to give way before the love for order and the instinct of obedience. In many children this develops very rapidly, especially where it is dictated by affection. The love of the child for his natural protectors is dominant whenever it is allowed real scope, and has, no doubt,

<sup>1</sup> *Studies of Childhood*, p. 234.

a good deal to do with the development of the higher loyalties in later years. As Professor Tracy says, 'It is a tolerably safe assertion that a child who, for any reason, has never worshipped his mother will be so much the less likely ever to worship any other divinity.' But, quite apart from this, there seems to be in children a native sense of justice, and a willingness to recognize the need for discipline. It has often been observed that children are apt to invent punishments for themselves, as in the case of the small girl who put her boots on the wrong feet as a penalty for some small offence which had been overlooked by her elders. There is no doubt as to the existence in children at a very early age of a genuine sense of right and wrong which leads them to approve and vindicate the one and condemn and punish the other. At the same time there is very little ground for connecting this with the embryonic religious consciousness. The connexion between them belongs to a later stage of development.

Much has been made by the students of child life of their quaint speculations on matters of theology. These certainly represent a very vivid exercise of the imagination. Whatever they may be taught about God, e.g., and the future life, they interpret it in their own way, and we can recognize as operative in the process the same crudely materialistic and literal methods of interpretation as are found among primitive peoples. Their conclusions are inevitably anthropomorphic. God is a superman in whom all the attributes of the humanity the child is acquainted with are raised to a higher power.

Alongside this imaginative credulity, however, we have to note the fact that many children show a real tendency to scepticism. They are often ruthlessly logical and decline to accept on authority statements and ideas which seem to contradict even their limited experience. They have no difficulty in listening to fairy tales and even invest them



with a certain reality, though they are quite aware that they are not true. And there are many cases on record where they resent being required to treat the Biblical stories in any different way. The child is so far a pragmatist as to be more concerned with the worth of a tale than with its truth. Yet he is always open to conviction, as is shown in the case of a small boy who entirely refused to believe in miracles until his first experience of the telephone. When he heard a friend, whose voice he knew, speaking from his office in London, he turned to his father and said, 'after this I can believe in miracles'.

The religion of children, then, may be said to arise out of a complex of inherited social instincts and personal relations. The course of its development is profoundly affected by suggestion, education, and atmosphere, and the chief use of the study of child psychology, and especially of the psychology of child religion, is in order to determine the right lines of education. For this purpose it is essential that care should be taken to secure a normal development of the faculties concerned with religion. Incalculable mischief may be done by premature forcing of the religious consciousness, and by repression of the natural instincts concerned. Psychology here may be of the greatest use so long as it is not made a fetish of, and is always regarded as a means to an end. Only the right kind of early religious education can deliver the growing child from the fears and obsessions which must otherwise accompany its adolescent awakening. The problem we have to face here is just the problem of education generally. The end of it all is the production of a free personality who will be able to enter for himself, and intelligently, into all the relations of life. This freedom can only be secured by slow degrees, and one of the most important steps towards it is knowing how to submit to authority. But in religion, as in all other things, the stage of authority is temporary. The

- child must grow out of it and be able to think and feel for himself if his religion is ever to be more than an artificial and second-hand business. Dr. Crichton Miller, in his book on *The New Psychology and the Teacher*, distinguishes three adjustments which the child must begin to make if
1. he is ever to be a complete human being. There is first the adjustment to society. The child must give play to his gregarious instincts and pass out of his self-centred isolation into full communion with his fellows. Secondly, there is
  2. the adjustment to the potential mate. Psychologically, the child must be prepared for this if he is to be normal, and he continues :
  3. 'The third adjustment which has to be made is the adjustment to the Infinite. It is useless for a person to consider himself adult while he is still pretending to himself and to the world that he does not know whether there is a God, and is indifferent on the subject. He is far from maturity if he does not know himself well enough to realize that he has got to settle in his own mind his own view of the Infinite and to adjust himself to it. Nor is his adjustment adequately made if he carries through life a conception founded primarily on childish experience: the conception of a God who is identified either with the severity or with the indulgence of his parents.'

To carry the child up naturally and instinctively from the lower stage of submission to authority and bring him out into a region where he can think his own thoughts about the Infinite and live his own religious life, is a task of the utmost delicacy and difficulty. It is no wonder that the rough and ready methods too often followed in home, school, and Church, produce such unsatisfactory results. What we want to attain is something like that which the book of Job describes in the words, 'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee.' This will never be achieved through a mixed pabulum of catechism, creed, and Bible. The intellectual side of it is

<sup>1</sup> pp. 80, 81.

perhaps the least important. It means rather a gradual realization of, and adjustment to, a spiritual world that comes by the example of loved ones rather than by precept, and proceeds naturally *pari passu* with those wider relationships with the outside world which education makes possible.

What Professor Tansley says of the general development of children is profoundly true of their religion :

'In the case of the growing child we have a complicated process at work. There is the development of the primitive instincts charged with their inherent energy, and accompanying this a constantly growing stock of free psychic energy seeking outlets. The mind develops in an environment which perpetually provides material for the formation of complexes of all sorts, both those directly corresponding with the great instincts, and others of the most varied kind, and also stimuli which excite and develop the complexes as they are formed. At the same time the environment establishes a chronic mental conflict between the purely egoistic impulses and sex, on the one hand, and herd instinct which checks and thwarts these impulses on the other. The attempt to divert the whole available energy from the primitive outlets leads at the best to a one-sided development of mind and character and often to overt disaster in later life, for the primitive instincts though they may be starved cannot be destroyed. A certain amount of their inherent energy may be sublimated with safety and advantage, but the effort cannot be wisely pressed beyond the point at which desperate resistance is encountered. Balance can only be maintained and healthy mental life guaranteed by the moulding effect of the conflict in the absence of decisive victory on one side or the other. The function of education in its widest sense is precisely to secure that the complexes formed, varying, of course, with the hereditary disposition, are such as to secure a fairly balanced allocation of the psychic energy available.'<sup>1</sup>

We now turn to the transition from childhood. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of the adolescent period for the development of religion in the

<sup>1</sup> *The New Psychology*, p. 85.

individual. The time is one at which the whole nature is profoundly stirred. Physiological changes take place which have very definite psychical reactions, and the whole future of the person concerned depends on these changes taking a normal course. The period lasts, roughly speaking, from the ages of thirteen to twenty-five. Its most marked outward manifestation is the growth of self-consciousness. The child ceases to look on itself in the third person, and is no longer a thing. At the same time there is a marked development of the social consciousness. The youth conceives of himself as in relation to others, and life takes on a new richness and complexity. There is a sense of mastery and an added self-importance which follow naturally from the consciousness of perfected bodily and mental powers.

What this means for religion it is not difficult to realize. In cases of normal development the religious teaching and impressions of childhood now come to a head, and are invested with a reality and significance they formerly lacked. As we have already seen, the adolescent crisis is invariably conditioned by the religious surroundings of earlier years. In most cases where the situation has been well and sensibly managed there is at adolescence a natural and healthy blossoming of religion. Indeed, crisis is much too strong a word to use of the process by which the religious ideas hitherto half understood and dimly held come to take a dominant position in thought and life. There are multitudes of young folks, brought up among sane religious influences, who confess that they never knew the time when they did not love God and try to serve Him. The only change they can point to is the growth of an assurance that their religious feeling was intensified and that its objects had become more real and its issues more vital. There is such a thing as the religion of the healthy-minded, and as salvation by education. But this

! fear!

is by no means the whole story. For many young folks adolescence is a time of religious storm and stress, This is due sometimes to temperament, but more frequently to bad religious training and antecedents. The attitude of doubt and scepticism which American writers regard as a characteristic of adolescence may be traced in the main to growing intellectual powers, and is so far healthy enough. But it may be greatly exaggerated and become morbid in cases where previous religious training has been too dogmatic, or has made too great demands on credulity. But by far the most frequent and distressing morbid symptom in religious adolescence is a sense of sin for which there is no real ground in the conduct of the subject. This is often connected with the development of the sexual powers, and no doubt with justification. But it is quite a mistake to make sex the sole cause of this early consciousness of sin. Very interesting comparisons have been instituted between Evangelical and Catholic adolescents in this regard, and evidence is available to show that a morbid feeling of sinfulness is far more common among the former than among the latter. This must be put down to the fact that in Evangelical circles it has been customary to lay much stress on sin and on the need for repentance, forgiveness, and change of heart, while in Catholic circles moral improvement is regarded as a normal accompaniment of growth both physical and intellectual. In Evangelical circles the stress laid on sin, and on the need for conviction of sin, often produces, even among adults, an artificial sense of sin and a crop of morbid fears. This result is greatly accentuated among adolescents, and not infrequently leads to hysteria and religious mania. Young people become obsessed with the idea that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that there is no hope for them in this world or the next. Even when matters are not carried to this extreme, there is produced



a condition of anxiety leading to an introspective self-criticism such as makes a healthy religious development quite impossible. The result is either a diseased and prematurely strained religious imagination, or an entire revolt against the whole religious appeal. Books like Gosse's *Father and Son*, or the more recent *Mary Lee*, by Geoffrey Dennis, afford striking illustration of the evil results of this type of religious training. We must not, however, dwell too exclusively on this darker side of the picture. It is by no means the whole story, nor are these morbid phenomena as common as they are often represented to be. The religious awakening of adolescence, if sometimes accompanied by storm and stress, is more generally an outblossoming of the whole nature into a larger and more wonderful world, and a more vivid apprehension of the meaning and value of life. It is marked by the growth of new loyalties both personal and social, by a quickened desire to subordinate the self to some beloved cause or object, and by a fresh appreciation of the beauty and worth of things. Sexual feeling is, without question, all powerful here, but it operates in healthy and life-giving ways quite as often as in those which are morbid and selfish. It should always be remembered that there is nothing wrong or unclean in sex feeling. It may be turned to the vilest uses, but it is in itself morally neutral, and is capable of being sublimated to the highest ends. With the average adolescent the religious interest has to compete with a vast number of other interests which now press upon the attention. The danger is not so much that it may be exaggerated or misdirected, as that it may be altogether swamped. That this does not invariably happen is a further testimony to the great strength of the religious impulse. In most normal cases it never fails to make its appeal, and where the educational process is well managed remains a positive influence for good. There is

no doubt as to the readiness with which the religious appeal is listened to during adolescence. Both sexes alike are open to it, though there is evidence to show that girls are more affected by the emotional appeal, while boys are more attracted by the ethical sanctions and implications of the religious life.

It is in view of all this that great importance is attached in all religions to initiation ceremonies. These not only serve to mark the entrance of the subject into full manhood and womanhood, but almost invariably carry with them some religious significance and involve instruction in and explanation of the religious secrets and practices of the tribe. There is here an age-long connexion between entrance into puberty, into the full life of the community, and into the mysteries and obligations of religion. It is true that among many primitive peoples, notably among the Australian aborigines, the initiation ceremonies are often used by the older men for their own ends and in order to keep women and the younger men in a proper state of subjection. For this purpose the terrors and sanctions of religion are freely pressed into service. This, however, does not detract from the fact that peoples of all races and degrees of civilization have recognized in adolescence a time of peculiar susceptibility to religious ideas, and have sought to use it in order to further those religious ends which are supposed to make for the well-being of the community. Almost invariably the ceremonial employed has been carefully calculated not only to test courage and endurance, often in incredibly cruel and barbarous ways, but also to bring home to the participants the secret meaning and binding force of traditional religious practices. Even among comparatively civilized peoples like the Greeks and Romans, the same tendencies are seen to be at work. In cases where religion had begun to decay, mythology, hero-worship, and the fear of the ancient Gods were all

brought into the service of education and used to give point and sanction to the ethical appeal. Among the Jews the time of adolescence is regarded as a great opportunity for inculcating in the young the principles of the Mosaic Law, and for teaching them the history and institutions of the chosen people. Children are then solemnly set apart for the service of their nation, and enter into its covenant blessings and obligations. Their initiation is followed up by a careful system of training intended to impress its lessons and guard them against the dangers of scepticism and apostasy. Among Christians the rite of Confirmation is almost universal, though it varies greatly in form. It is a kind of initiation, and the first Communion is invested with the greatest solemnity as marking a real dividing line in life. Naturally greater stress is laid upon it in those circles where salvation by education is regarded as the normal thing, than in Evangelical circles where a definite conversion is expected as the beginning of the religious life.

There is, then, no question about the unanimity with which adolescence is regarded as the time when religion becomes articulate and religious impressions are most readily received. We have here a further confirmation of the fact that religion belongs to man's normal development. It fits in naturally to his world outlook, and plays its part in helping to adapt him to his circumstances and environment. Under certain conditions we may expect that its first onset should be cataclysmic, but this is by no means necessary, and even where it occurs does not detract from the essential fitness of the whole process. If it is true that man is made for God, then it is natural that there should come a point in his career when he turns to God with some set purpose. The conditions under which this is done, and the phenomena by which it is accompanied, may vary greatly, but do not affect the fundamental reasons for the

change. This may be further illustrated by the fact that in those cases where the religious awakening is of a highly emotional type it is preceded or accompanied by feelings of dissatisfaction and incompleteness, which are entirely removed by surrender to the will of God and give place to a state of peace, well-being, and happiness, the goal of all desire.

We must beware, then, of concluding that there is anything fixed or stereotyped about adolescent religious experiences. These vary indefinitely with the temperament of the subjects and with their training and surroundings. The attempts which Starbuck and other American psychologists have made to give a schematic form to the religious consciousness at this period have not been very successful. It is no doubt possible to distinguish certain classes of adolescents where similar treatment produces similar results, but there is nothing in this to detract from the strongly individual character of the whole process. Whatever be the influences brought to bear upon him, each individual concerned experiences his religious awakening for and by himself. This appears also when we come to examine the causes through which religion, hitherto only on the margin of consciousness, is brought to its centre, and becomes a matter of all-absorbing interest. What is it that awakens attention just at this time and gives it a religious direction? We cannot point to any one cause, save in the most general sense to the emotional and intellectual turmoil characteristic of the adolescent period. Why, however, this should issue in religion in some cases and not in others depends upon other considerations than adolescence itself. The most powerful of these are undoubtedly temperament in the first place and previous religious environment in the second, though they are too closely related to be considered apart. Where adolescence discovers a marked predisposition to the religious life, it is

*long Training*  
generally due to judicious religious training working on a fairly docile subject. Where, however, the training has

1. been of a kind unsuited to the mentality of children, e.g. where it has insisted on the conviction of sin and the necessity of conversion and has dwelt much on the darker and penal side of religious discipline, one of two results will probably follow. In the case of natures that are amenable and religiously inclined there will be produced a condition of nervous excitability and morbid fear which will generally end in a more or less sensational conversion. In the case of harder and more intellectual natures the
2. probable issue will be an entire revolt against the whole system of ideas thus represented, and in the end scepticism and an atrophy of the religious sense. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the harm that may be done by premature emphasis on the darker side of religious experience. That there is a place for the preaching of sin, repentance, and forgiveness, there can be no manner of doubt, but its use and efficacy will entirely depend on circumstances. It is not likely to bear good fruit unless addressed to an experience which it can meet with some relevance. If and when an artificial experience is created either by it or for it, the results are likely to be disastrous. With adolescents, who in the nature of the case can have had no very deep experience of sin, the attempt to evoke such experience is often responsible, on the one hand, for the fear that they have committed the unpardonable sin, a frequent precursor of religious mania, and on the other for a morbid exaggeration of the sinfulness of sexual feelings which, in themselves, are quite natural and innocent. All this again points to the very great importance of a sound and suitable religious training, if the inevitable awakening to religion is to follow normal lines. For normal adolescents, at any rate, there is no doubt that the religion of healthy-mindedness is the right and indeed the usual thing. The very



qualities which make it insufficient as representing the religious experience of adults, serve to commend it as the best way of introducing religious ideas to the adolescent. If there is any truth in our contention that religion is natural to man, then it should grow with his growth and become one of the normal factors in his development and in his self-adjustment to the universe.

It is no doubt in the religion of adolescence that the influence of sex feeling, to which we have had occasion to refer before, is most marked. But the fact that the first religious awakening is often synchronous with puberty does not justify us in deriving the one from the other. Both alike have their source and occasion in the general outburst of vitality at this period. Nor again does even so much as this imply that 'the differential essence of religion is always reducible to a sex ecstasy'.<sup>1</sup> The excitement, the melancholy, the loneliness, and the doubts and fears to which religious awakening gives rise may all, no doubt, be very similar to the phenomena which accompany the dawning of love's young dream. And the same physical causes may very well be at work in both cases. But that is not to identify the two processes, still less to put the one on the same level as the other. In normal cases the difference between them is marked and they work out to altogether different issues. In abnormal cases we may frequently see religion taking the form of erotomania, but this is at once recognized to be abnormal and to belong to the region of the psychopathic. Short of this dangerous result it is possible to find many degrees of slight abnormality in adolescence where the exaggeration of sex feeling, or bad habits connected with it, so obsess the mind with the subject that it comes to colour religion as it colours the whole of life. But this again must be recognized to be the exception rather than the rule. On the

<sup>1</sup> Schroeder.

whole subject James concludes with great good sense as follows :

'The plain truth is that to interpret religion one must in the end look at the immediate content of the religious consciousness. The moment one does this, one sees how wholly disconnected it is in the main from the content of the sexual consciousness. Everything about the two things differs, objects, moods, faculties concerned, and acts impelled to. Any general assimilation is simply impossible. What we find most often is complete hostility and contrast. If now the defenders of the sex theory say that this makes no difference to their thesis: that without the chemical contributions which the sex organs make to the blood, the brain would not be nourished, so as to carry on religious activities, this final proposition may be true or not true: but at any rate it has become profoundly uninformative; we can deduce no consequence from it which help us to interpret religious meaning or value. In this sense the religious life depends just as much upon the spleen, the pancreas, and the kidneys as on the sexual apparatus, and the whole theory has lost its point in evaporating into a vague general assertion of the dependence, *somehow*, of the mind upon the body.'<sup>1</sup>

The study of the religion of adolescents only adds to the weight of the evidence in favour of the general conclusion that religion is natural to man. We need not be surprised, therefore, if at this most critical period of human life, when the personality is completed and begins to enter into its inheritance, religion plays a considerable part and itself undergoes changes analogous to those experienced in the physical organism. Here, as always, religion is the expression of the whole personality, and is not to be confined to any one emotion, faculty, or instinct. It is, therefore, closely bound up with the development of the subject as a whole, and will be influenced by, while also influencing, all the traits and experiences of his being. That, under the stress of this blossoming time, certain exaggerations should make themselves felt is also quite natural. Where

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 12 note.

these become morbid, however, it is generally due to some of those too frequent defects in previous training and environment. There is no reason on the face of things, why the religious process should not follow the same normal and healthy lines of development that we look for in the bodily processes at these times. As the latter are secured by a careful attention to hygiene, so the former. If there is any value at all in the psychological study of religion it should convince us that there is a spiritual hygiene, the neglect of which is fruitful in disaster to human life. It is as possible to atrophy the religious faculty as it is any of our physical organs or powers, and it is equally possible to use methods of training and discipline for the soul as for the body. Hence we cannot exaggerate the importance of sound religious nurture.<sup>1</sup> It is the prime condition of a healthy development of our spiritual powers, and will do more than perhaps anything else to secure a happy issue from the spiritual and intellectual turmoil and tremors of the adolescent period of our lives.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

*The Child and Religion*, by various writers, London, 1905.

Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*, New York, 1904.

Tracy, *The Psychology of Childhood*, Boston, 1909.

Schreider, *Der Kinderglaube*, Leipzig, 1909.

King, *Psychology of Child Development*, Chicago, 1903.

Compayre, *L'évolution intellectuelle et morale de l'enfant*, Paris, 1896.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Christian Nurture*, by Horace Bushnell, a book which, though quite innocent of modern psychology, is by no means out of date.

## X

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONVERSION

FOR the purpose of this discussion it will be advisable to use the word conversion in the broadest possible sense. As we have already seen, it covers phenomena which are common to all religions, though they find very various forms of expression. In the words of Professor James they represent the process by which religious ideas previously peripheral in the consciousness become central and dominant. This process may be gradual or sudden, and may or may not be accompanied by violent physical or psychical manifestations. In some cases the change takes place equably and almost imperceptibly. In others it is well marked and cataclysmic. But the term conversion ought not to be confined, as it often is, to these latter. If it is so confined, then the Dean of St. Paul's is undoubtedly right in asserting that conversion is not a universal religious experience. There are many devout souls who have passed through no such sudden change as is indicated; still less have they experienced any violent convulsion of their nature. Their religious life was developed by easy and natural stages, they are not conscious of any crisis, nor can they point to any moment when they experienced a radical transformation of attitude or character. But with others it is very different. Their religious awakening is accompanied by profound emotional disturbances, and even by physical distress. They pass from a state of carelessness and indifference to religion into one of intense and even passionate devotion. Both types, however, are

equally interesting and equally important for the student of religion. It is his task to examine the causes of the difference, and to determine the conditions which produce these marked varieties in experience.

In the broader sense of the word, then, conversion may be described as the process by which the self, hitherto divided and unhappy, becomes unified and satisfied under the impulse of religious ideas and motives. As we have seen, the process may be either gradual or sudden, though even when apparently most sudden and unexpected, we have to allow for the unconscious incubation of the ideas which then spring into consciousness. Professor James contrasts the two types as the religion of the healthy minded and the religion of the twice born. There can be no objection to such a characterization so long as it simply states the facts and does not carry with it a preference for one type to the exclusion of the other. We have already suggested that we cannot rule out the religion of healthy mindedness and subject every one to the experiences of the twice born. Nor, on the other hand, can we argue that the religion of normal development (healthy mindedness) is always superior. It has great advantages, but it has also serious defects, as e.g. its incapacity to deal adequately with sin and evil. In all cases of conversion we have to reckon partly with the conscious activities of intellect, feeling, and will, and partly with the subconscious maturing of ideas and motives deposited by past teaching and experience. Previous mental and spiritual habits are all important in determining the form of the change.

Psychology teaches us that by the law of association }  
a man's ideas, aims, and objects tend to group themselves }  
into relatively independent systems. When one of these }  
comes to absorb the mental field all the others fade into the }  
background. So Starbuck defines the process as follows :  
' Conversion is suddenly forsaking the lower for the higher

*Conversion*



*Hall*  
self. In terms of the neural basis of consciousness, it is an inhibition of the lower channels of nervous discharge through the establishment of higher connexions and the identification of the ego with the new activities. In theological terminology, it is Christ coming into the heart and the old life being blotted out—the human life swallowed up in the life of God.’ Again, according to Stanley Hall, ‘In its most fundamental sense conversion is a natural, normal, universal, and necessary process at the stage when life pivots over from an auto-centric to an hetero-centric basis.’ ‘Religion has no other function than to make this change complete, and the whole of morality may be well defined as life in the interests of the race, for love of God and love of man are one and inseparable.’ But however we may define it, we always find underlying this process of conversion a certain unrest and dissatisfaction due to an internal disharmony. There are forces in and around human life which tend to disturb the unity and harmony of consciousness. They arise sometimes from without, but more often from within. The disturbance in its turn brings about a sense of contrast between what is and what might be. Here are the birth pangs of idealism. It is often the desire to realize ideals, and by this means to produce unity and harmony of being, that is one of the chief causes leading up to conversion. In normal cases this positive influence is probably quite as potent as the more negative recoil from evil and sin which has also to be reckoned with. Both influences may work sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously.

There is no doubt that a man's life, generally speaking, is shaped and regulated by the ideas which, from time to time, form the centre of his consciousness. And it is a perfectly legitimate description of conversion to say that it is brought about by a change of ideas, or rather of emphasis. When certain ideas previously on the fringe of

consciousness and dimly felt become central and vividly realized, what we call a conversion takes place. It is the task of psychology to describe and so far explain this process. It can trace the various stages in it and distinguish the factors which are operative. But this is not fully to account for it. The question still remains as to why certain ideas previously peripheral become central, and this question psychology alone cannot answer. It is not enough to say that it is all due to the ferment of adolescence, or to the emergence of subconscious influences due to past training, or to some emotional experience. When all that has been said the question why, and why at that particular time still remains. The more closely the matter is investigated the more clearly are we justified in declaring from the religious point of view that the direct action of the Spirit of God is here not excluded. All that we claim is that such action will take place through the normal operation of mental and psychic processes. Psychology at least does not close the door to that factor in the situation, though it has to be sought and dealt with on quite other grounds. The point is one in regard to which the honest inquirer will at least keep an open mind.

We now turn to the study of the phenomena of conversion mainly from the point of view of their underlying psychology. For this there are rich materials available. These are by no means confined to the records of the Christian religion. As has already been suggested, the initiation ceremonies in many other religions show striking parallels to certain forms of adolescent conversion in various branches of the Christian church. But in more advanced religions these parallels are much deeper than a merely external resemblance. For example, the story of the Buddha under the Bo tree presents some features which recall the experiences of a Christian convert like

John Bunyan. There is the intense feeling of misery and dissatisfaction caused by the sense of sin and evil, and the consequent recoil from it. There is the sudden breaking in of light, the vision of a way out, the feeling of emancipation, and the determination to follow the way. Though the details of this story may be largely mythical, they point to an experience which is psychologically true. A parallel case in more modern times is that of the Brahmin devotee Ramakrishna.<sup>1</sup> He passed through a long period of storm and stress struggling against pride and sensual sins, possessed by a feeling of inefficiency and incompleteness, and striving always towards an ideal. The victory came to him gradually and took the shape of a moral and intellectual illumination, freedom from his lower self, and the power to see God everywhere and in all men and things. So, too, the Bengalese Chatanya was brought, when on a pilgrimage, to Bhakti or loving devotion to Krishna, and the experience turned his coldly philosophical type of religion into a warm and eager service of mankind. Similar experiences may be found both in Greek and Roman religion and among Moslem mystics, but it is in Christianity that the experience of conversion has played the greatest part, until in many quarters it has come to be regarded as an essential feature of religious development. The best materials for studying it are to be derived from Christian biographies, both ancient and modern. Classical instances like those of St. Augustine, St. Francis, and Bunyan present many features in common and are full of instruction. In modern times the study of them has been rather superseded by a more statistical type of investigation based on inquiries among living persons. The pioneer in this method is the American psychologist, Starbuck, to whose questionnaires on this and other subjects we have already had occasion to refer. Making

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. Max Müller's *Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*.

all allowance for the obvious defects of such a method we have to admit that it provides some extremely interesting and valuable results such as no serious student of the subject can afford to ignore. It would not be wise to base conclusions on these results alone. But when they are taken along with the results of biographical and autobiographical investigations, and when, as is often the case, a large amount of agreement is found among them, we may be fairly sure that we are on safe ground.

The classic stages then in the process of conversion are as follows: (1) a sense of unrest, imperfection, and impotence accompanied by a morbid self-analysis, fear of the future, and longing for better things; (2) a crisis more or less sudden and irresistible, a feeling of passivity in the grip of another power or will; (3) a sense of peace, newness of life, and satisfaction.

This process varies according as the background is juridical or mystical. In Christianity the former is common; what the soul seeks is to get right with God and have the barrier of sin removed. In the latter case the aim is rather union with God and the annihilation of the self.

Such stages in the process of religious awakening are very clearly distinguished by Mr. H. G. Wells in his book, *God the Invisible King*. First, we find him distressed and perplexed by the contradictions of things, and without any clear idea as to the issue. Then comes the thought of God, but vague and unsatisfactory, and the soul hangs in uncertainty swept by dim longings. 'Then suddenly', to use his own words:

'In a little while in His own time God comes. This cardinal experience is an undoubting immediate sense of God. It is the attainment of an absolute certainty that one is not alone in oneself. It is as if one was touched at every point by a being akin to oneself, sympathetic, beyond measure wiser, steadfast and pure in aim. It is completer and more intimate, but it is like standing side by side with and

touching some one that we love very dearly and trust completely.<sup>1</sup>

The first point which emerges as the result of all types of inquiry is the fact that conversion is beyond all question a phenomenon of adolescence. This does not exclude the possibility of such a change taking place in later years, but it certainly marks it as less usual. In adolescence, however, it becomes almost a normal condition. The profound physical changes which then take place have the most far-reaching mental and psychical effects. There is an all-round development of the personality, and it is not possible to distinguish in any hard and fast way the physical from the psychical and intellectual processes involved. On the psychical side alone adolescence generally is marked by a decline in the sensory elements in consciousness and a development in, or even birth of rational insight. In other words the nature becomes less instinctive and more reflective, and reflection gives birth to the sense of conflict and disease of which conversion is the issue. The change is also accompanied by an intensification of self-consciousness, and also of the consciousness of the self in relation to others, both of which tend to manifest themselves in disturbing ways. Even if we accept McDougall's limitation of adolescent changes to the influence of sexual development, and deny that other innate tendencies previously dormant then become active, there is no controverting the evidence that the purely physical change has marked psychological accompaniments. Under the influence of these deep stirrings the whole physical nature becomes far more sensitive to influences of all kinds. The intensification of self-consciousness by itself, quite apart from any repressive influences which may be brought to bear, will account for many of the phenomena in question.

When we come to study cases of conversion, whether

<sup>1</sup> *God the Invisible King*, p. 27.



among adolescents or others, we are confronted with an immense variety of motives, conditions, and experiences which accompany or lead up to the spiritual crisis. In explicating these, Starbuck's analytical method has proved very useful. In a multitude of cases examined the following factors are found to operate, but not of course all at the same time, or in the same degree, or in every case. (1) Fear—generally derived or induced by bad teaching or repression, but sometimes spontaneous. (2) Self-regarding motives, such as the desire for approval, ambition, &c. (3) Altruistic feelings—the desire to help others, or to do good. (4) The pursuit of a moral ideal. (5) The sense of sin and remorse. (6) Response to teaching. (7) The influence of example and imitativeness. (8) Various social influences. Starbuck considers that among these the self-regarding and altruistic motives are much less influential than any of the others, and he adduces evidence to show that there is a difference between the two sexes as regards their amenability to these influences. He considers that males are more controlled by internal motives and suggestions, and females more by those from without. It is not, however, easy to reconcile this with the generally accepted fact, that in religious matters women are more open to emotional influences than men. To this point, however, we must return.

The question as to the part played in conversion by the consciousness and conviction of sin has been, and is still being, hotly debated. William James and Starbuck insist that it is a regular feature in the experience and that conversion is usually 'a process of struggling away from sin rather than of striving towards righteousness'. Pratt, on the other hand, altogether denies this, and would go to the other extreme of confining the conviction of sin to exceptional cases. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two. It has always to be remembered that American

writers on this subject have had to derive most of their materials from quarters dominated by an Evangelical theology of a rather pronounced type. It came to America from the Evangelical revival in this country, and was meditated through Jonathan Edwards, whose revivalistic Calvinism held sway in orthodox circles from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards. Given this peculiar theological background, it was quite natural that a sense of sin should come to be required as the prior condition of any real religious awakening. But where such a sense of sin was present it was due rather to the influence of previous teaching as to the original corruption of human nature and its need of cleansing and deliverance, than to any natural development of the conversion crisis. Here the sense of sin must be regarded as having been artificially induced, though in others where definite sins had been committed it would no doubt be genuine enough. Even in these latter cases it is more often a consciousness of the recoil from certain specific forms of wrongdoing than a general consciousness of sin as such. Where there has been no such experience, however, we have often to reckon with the feelings of conflict, unrest, and dissociation which are common at adolescence, and not unknown at other periods of life. While these feelings do not in themselves amount to a conviction of sin, it is easy to see how they can become so under the influence of certain theological ideas. It must be remembered, on the other hand, that the sense of sin is not by any means most pronounced in those whose moral record is worst. Sometimes this leads to callousness, and in such cases it is difficult to produce any real penitence or conviction. There is, therefore, something to be said for the view—the greater the saint the greater the sense of sin. Such conviction of sin is often deepest in those whose lives have been to all appearance exemplary. It arises from a feeling of alienation

from God, and from a morbid exaggeration of minor faults, and is sometimes sexual in its origin and expression. But the important point to note is that it has the same effect on the spiritual outlook and development as a sense of sin which has far more real justification. That this condition of unrest and dissatisfaction is a quite common precursor of a spiritual crisis goes without saying. It is most frequently found in those cases where sensibility predominates over intellect and will, and where there is a tendency to automatic mental processes. If it is true that women respond to emotional stimuli more readily than men, then it may be expected that to that extent they will be found to offer a more favourable field for conversion.

It must be remembered also that conversion has a positive as well as a negative aspect. It may, and often does, consist in spiritual illumination, and in a widening of the whole horizon of life, rather than in a reaction from a previous condition of sinfulness and unrest. The two conditions are often combined but not necessarily so. There is some evidence for regarding the former as more characteristic of adults, and the latter of adolescents.

The question as to the relation and functions of the conscious and unconscious mind in conversion must next be considered. Both elements are present in all normal cases. Indeed, it is often said that there is no such thing as sudden conversion. When it appears to be sudden and shows itself as an unexpected decision to follow a certain line of conduct, or abandon certain practices which are habitual, what really happens is that this comes about as the result of a process of incubation in which certain psychic forces which suddenly manifest themselves have long been maturing and gathering strength. A classic instance is that of the conversion of St. Paul. The vision on the road to Damascus, resulting as it did in an immediate but lasting change in the whole tenor of the Apostle's

life, was sudden enough in its onset. But it is generally agreed that it was the result of impressions and experiences which had accumulated in the subconscious region until they were forced into expression. Jung claims that his persecutions were an unconscious resistance to Christianity to which he had already unwillingly yielded. The later writings of the Apostle reveal the fact that he had derived vivid impressions of the teaching and personality of Jesus Christ from the testimony of Christians, that he had been impressed by their demeanour under persecutions, notably in the case of Stephen, and that he was himself in a condition of unrest and uncertainty due to his conscious failure under the Jewish system to attain right relations with God. All this had prepared the soil of his mind for the suggestion that the Christians were right and that he was wrong, and when this suggestion came to him on the road to Damascus, with overwhelming force, it carried the day. The same may be said of cases like those of Tolstoi, Pascal, and Brainerd, where a similar sudden self-determination and change of front is brought about after or in the midst of a period of dissatisfaction and unrest, though in some cases the condition is greatly aggravated by the consciousness of past sensual sins. Here the psychological situation is perfectly clear and shows the importance of the subjective conditions at work. But when all allowance has been made for them it does not follow that other considerations must be ruled out. It is undoubtedly wrong to refer the whole matter to the operation of supernatural influences working arbitrarily and coercing will and judgement. But it is equally extreme to argue that such influences must be altogether excluded. This question has to be decided on other than psychological grounds. To those who believe in God's presence in and with his creatures it presents no difficulties. The conviction that God is speaking and acting in these deep experiences of the soul is

almost always an important factor in the situation. Psychology cannot prove that it is groundless, it can only show how it works.

Further, the importance of the unconscious element in conversion is shown by the influence of previous theological and religious training in determining the form of the change. Since the time of the evangelical revival, sudden conversion under conviction of sin has been regarded in many religious circles as a thing to be expected, and the preaching of it has undoubtedly produced it. The effect of such preaching has been enhanced by mass suggestion, and this again has tended to give rise to violent demonstrations of a definitely psychopathic kind. Investigation of such cases shows that there is practically no limit to the power of suggestion on temperaments prepared by nature or previous training to respond to emotional stimuli. It cannot be too strongly urged that the influence of a hyper-evangelical atmosphere and education is all powerful in determining the exact form of religious crisis experienced by many adolescents. So far as it is thus predetermined the crisis must be regarded as artificial. Many of the frequent cases of serious lapse after conversion are due to this fact and might be avoided if the whole situation were dealt with in a more temperate and less markedly theological manner. When the subconscious mind has been prepared by repeated suggestions as to sin and the conditions of forgiveness, it is comparatively easy to induce the experience to which such teaching points. Such experience, however, is not likely to be very lasting unless the process of suggestion can be maintained, and even then may retain a certain appearance of unreality. In evangelical circles it is not infrequently the case that those who have given every evidence of conviction of sin and conversion, and who are regarded as shining examples of the faith, do at the same time altogether fail to give evidence



of any real Christianizing of character. It is quite possible to be soundly converted according to all the accepted standards and yet to remain censorious, uncharitable, and mean to a degree that is quite incompatible with any really Christian interpretation of conduct.

The importance of all this for Christian education goes without saying. We have to recognize the fact that the contents of the subconscious mind may at any given moment determine the direction of conscious activities. In religion, as in other things, we are very much what we have prepared ourselves to be. If, then, religious development is to follow a natural and healthy course and lead to an all-round raising of the standard and ideals of life, it must be based on a process of preparation which does no violence to the moral and spiritual nature, but provides an incubation of life forces which will in due time find for themselves natural forms of expression. From this point of view, then, as well as from others previously indicated, there is a great deal to be said for salvation by education. This does not rule out conversion, though it does alter our conception of it. That men and women become religious through some process which determines their nature and activities in a religious direction will be generally agreed. But it is not necessary that this process should be sudden, or that it should be accompanied by a severe emotional crisis. Where this is the case it is generally in circles where men and women are taught to expect some experience of the kind. When it duly appears it must be regarded as due to the subconscious influence of such teaching rather than to anything which can be called a normal course of spiritual or moral development.

When we come to consider the factors at work in ordinary cases of conversion, experience shows how very varied they are, both in form and mode of operation. Starbuck distinguishes the following: (1) Self-surrender.

(2) Determination or exercise of will. (3) The sense of forgiveness. (4) The sense of Divine help or presence. (5) Public confession. (6) Spontaneous awakening. (7) The feeling of oneness with God. Now there is no doubt that all of these influences are found to operate at different times and in different degrees, and it is better to recognize this great variety than to begin by dividing cases of conversion into those of the voluntary and those of the involuntary type. It will be seen, however, that the classification given above seems to presuppose the evangelical type of experience and to regard conversion too exclusively from that point of view. Even James, for example, while he recognizes the existence of other and voluntary types of religious awakening easily sets them on one side as infrequent and unimportant. He says :

‘Of the volitional type of conversion it would be easy to give examples, but they are as a rule less interesting than those of the self-surrender type in which the subconscious effects are more abundant and often startling. . . . Even in the most voluntarily built up sort of regeneration there are passages of partial self-surrender interposed.’

James then goes on to accept the point of view of Starbuck as follows :

‘“The personal will,” says Dr. Starbuck, “must be given up. In many cases relief persistently refuses to come until the person ceases to resist or to make an effort in the direction he desires to go.” Dr. Starbuck gives an interesting, and it seems to me a true account—so far as conception so schematic can claim truth at all—of the reasons why self-surrender at the last moment should be so indispensable. To begin with, there are two things in the mind of the candidate for conversion : first the present incompleteness or wrongness—the “sin” which he is eager to escape from : and second, the positive ideal which he longs to compass. Now with most of us the sense of our present wrongness is a far more distinct piece of our consciousness than is the imagination of any positive ideal we can aim at. In the majority of cases, indeed, the sin almost exclusively engrosses attention so that conversion is “a

process of struggling away from sin rather than of striving towards righteousness".<sup>1</sup>

It is only fair to say that among American psychologists there is at least one, Dr. W. Pratt, who entirely dissents from this conclusion. That such cases as James and Starbuck are fond of describing exist, there can be no question, but they are neither so frequent nor so normal as the experience of evangelicals seems to suggest. They are in nearly all cases due to the subconscious influence of theological presuppositions, an influence which is by no means necessarily healthy. In studying the factors at work in conversion, or religious awakening, we shall do well to have before our minds not extreme cases, but rather those of a more normal sort where the change comes about gradually but with some intensification of emotional experience at the adolescent period.

At the same time we must recognize the fact that sudden conversion is not confined to those cases which have been artificially prepared by evangelical Christian teaching. Nor are such cases the only ones which show traces of the influence of a dissociated personality, sense of sin, and desire for unity and peace. Though this may seem to conflict with some of our previous conclusions it is not so in reality. All we would contend for is that conversion is a religious experience which is apt to be conditioned always by the previous training and surroundings of the subject. An excellent modern illustration of this may be found in the following account from his own lips of the conversion of the Sadhu Sundar Singh :

'Preachers and Christians in general had often come to me and I used to resist them and persecute them. When I was out in any town, I got people to throw stones at Christian preachers. I would tear up the Bible and burn it when I had a chance. In the presence of my father I cut up the Bible and other Christian books and put kerosene

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 209.

oil upon them and burnt them. I thought this was a false religion and did all I could to destroy it. I was faithful to my own religion, but I could not get any satisfaction or peace, though I performed all the ceremonies and rites of that religion. So I thought of leaving it all and committing suicide. Three days after I had burnt the Bible I woke up about 3 o'clock, had my usual bath, and prayed, "O God, if there is a God, wilt thou show me the right way or I will kill myself." My intention was that if I got no satisfaction, I would place my head on the railway line when the 5 o'clock train passed by, and kill myself. If I got no satisfaction in this life I thought I would get it in the next. I was praying and praying but got no answer; and I prayed half an hour longer, hoping to get peace. At 4.30 a.m. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire. I looked round but could find nothing. Then the thought came to me that this might be an answer that God had sent me. Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, "How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it?" The thought then came to me, Jesus Christ is not dead but living, and it must be He Himself. So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was wishing to get. This was heaven itself. When I got up the vision had all disappeared, but although the vision disappeared the peace and joy have remained with me ever since.<sup>1</sup>

This is a remarkable story, and it will be seen at once that it presents many features which recall other well-known conversion narratives. The resemblance to the story of St. Paul is obvious. It might appear that the form of the vision was suggested by that story, were it not that the

<sup>1</sup> *The Sadhu*, by Streeter and Appasamy, p. 5.

Sadhu is under the impression that he did not know of the story of St. Paul at the time. He is quite clear, however, that he had a knowledge of the story of Jesus Christ and that this had something to do with leading up to his conversion. He also declares that the vision he then saw was an actual bodily vision and quite different from later experiences when his visions were mental and spiritual, i. e. purely subjective. In any case, however, there was no previous theological theory of sin and of the necessity of repentance and escape from it, such as generally conditions the conversion experience of certain types of Christians. We have here the case of an adolescent (for he was no more) who found himself temperamentally unfitted for the mental and spiritual role his circumstances forced upon him. Behind his conversion there no doubt lies a long period of subconscious preparation. The outward signs of this are found in restlessness, longing for peace, and dissatisfaction with the conventional religious forms. There is an intense desire, not for self-surrender, that comes later, but for self-realization and for a religious atmosphere which will make it possible. We may legitimately argue from the analogy of natural processes that all these are phenomena of growth, a kind of spiritual growing pains. They belong to the development of a personality that cannot find satisfaction in its native intellectual and spiritual surroundings, but must discover for itself a new and happier environment. The stress and difficulty of the process vary greatly with different temperaments, but in all cases the *primum movens* is the urge towards self-realization. There is self-determination in it, a reaching out towards a higher world or a higher power or powers, and a desire to merge or sink the self in something or some one greater. With this, too, often goes a longing for self-purification, and with that a recoil from evil, greater or less in intensity according as the previous life has been morally sound or unsound. The



whole situation is due to the combination in man of the psychic and the physical. It is only through a proper balance of elements that sane and normal life is possible, and whenever there is excess on one side or the other an intensification of the critical period may be expected. In John Masefield's poem, *The Everlasting Mercy*, we have an imaginative but psychologically true description of the sudden spiritual illumination of a life that had hitherto been wholly lived on the animal plain. Actual cases of the same thing may be found in John Bunyan and St. Augustine. On the other hand, the experience of the Sadhu, and probably also that of the Buddha, if the traditional story may be accepted, point to a similar result following from an unusually acute sensitiveness to the psychic or spiritual. The factors at work in these cases can be analysed and determined, but psychology at any rate does not forbid the possibility of the influence of spiritual forces from without. The belief that such is the case is almost invariably present. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to relegate all religious experience to the realm of the unreal and phantasmal it will be well to maintain, at least, the possibility that this belief has some correspondence in reality. This is especially justifiable when the experience in question results in a real moral awakening and katharsis and a life of service and self-sacrifice.

The situation is altogether different, however, when a religious crisis takes place and continues on the purely emotional plane. We have seen already that in any sane and effective religious experience there must be a co-operation and due balance of the various psychological factors and faculties. Emotion, intellect, and will are all concerned, and a religious awakening in which the first named alone is operative is not likely to be very useful or lasting. This leads us to consider the type of conversion which takes place under strong excitement, generally induced by

emotional appeals and intensified by mass suggestion. The whole subject is an interesting branch of the study of crowd psychology. It has, for example, always been regarded as legitimate in the Christian church to attempt to stimulate the religious life and to lead men and women to religious decision by preaching, singing, and other forms of appeal, all more or less emotional. In doing so the Church has not infrequently liberated forces which have been quite beyond its control. The phenomena of Pentecost are but one example of this form of spiritual excitation, and it has many parallels in the religious and initiation practices of primitive and savage peoples. Among these, and even at times among civilized and Christian folk, religious excitement thus induced has led to grave sensual excesses. The emotional forces thus let loose from restraint have found expression for themselves in far other than spiritual directions. This, no doubt, belongs to the region of the pathological or psychopathic, but it serves to indicate the dangers and suggest the limitations of what are otherwise normal manifestations of spiritual energy. In many cases we have to recognize the action of suggestion of an almost hypnotic kind upon excitable natures and under favourable conditions, particularly the presence of numbers of others like-minded and affected in the same way.<sup>1</sup> Many of the most successful Christian evangelists possess unquestionable hypnotic powers, and these are apt to be very dangerous unless used with medical knowledge and under due restraint. Apart from this, however, religious revivals generally provide excellent examples of the working of the mob mind. M. le Bon in his book *The Crowd* says, 'When it is proposed to imbue the mind of a crowd with ideas and

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy in this connexion that M. Coué prefers to treat his patients in an open clinic with other patients looking on. What they see happening to others increases their suggestibility and renders treatment easier. The same principle is at work in religious gatherings.

beliefs—with modern theories for instance—the leaders have recourse to different expedients. The principal of them are three in number and clearly defined—affirmation, repetition, contagion.’ Both politicians and revivalists know how to use these methods with marked success. There is, however, one form of crowd contagion which seems peculiar to religious gatherings. Many revivals have been accompanied by physical phenomena of the most painful kind. Crying, screaming, speaking with tongues, dancing, epileptic movements and cataleptic states, were all common in the revivals under Jonathan Edwards in America, under John Wesley in England, and under Evan Roberts in Wales. That such effects of religious excitement are morbid and unnecessary may be inferred from the fact that there is good evidence to show that the revivals accompanied by them are not very lasting in their results. Starbuck has collected statistics which show that in revival conversions 60 per cent. of the new converts fell away in the first six weeks, while in the case of a similar number of conversions which took place in the course of ordinary Church instruction, those who fell away in the same period were only 20 per cent. These unsatisfactory results of revivalism, however, do not in any way lessen the value and reality of conversion as a normal feature of religious experience. Indeed, the more closely the phenomena of religious awakening are studied the more clear does it become that they represent something real in human development. It is because man’s nature is inherently religious, and because religion is so closely bound up with the normal functioning of his instincts, that his nature is so profoundly moved when his religion becomes conscious and articulate. To further this process and to ensure that it shall be carried out in a sane and normal fashion, and without undue emotional disturbance, should be one of the great objects of religious education.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

Gill, *The Psychological Aspects of Christian Experience*, Boston, 1905.

Burr, *Religious Confessions and Confessants*, Boston, 1914.

Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, New York, 1905.

Marshall, *Conversion or the New Birth*, London, 1909.

Begbie, *In the Hand of the Potter*, London, 1911.

## XI

### PRAYER

THE practice of prayer<sup>1</sup> in one or other of its many forms is a universal religious phenomenon, and presents to the student psychological problems of the greatest interest and importance. Even in religions like Buddhism, which have little or no conception of a personal God, and in certain lower forms of animism where the conception of a spirit-world is vague and inarticulate, prayer is a real and permanent feature. Roughly speaking prayer like speech is born of the desire for intercourse with others. It witnesses to the widespread and almost instinctive impulse of man to approach the powers around and above him in such a way as that he shall avert their wrath and secure their favour. He believes that they can be so approached and that his words, attitudes, and actions can be so shaped as to further, if not actually to secure, the fulfilment of his wishes. To this end he is, no doubt, largely moved by fear and by the instinct of self-preservation. In most prayers the propitiatory element plays a large part, and in all probability fear of the uncanny and the unknown was the chief operative factor in primitive praying. But the petitionary element was never quite absent. If prayer can be rightly described as a wish referred to God, or to some power outside ourselves, then the description will hold good of its earliest as well as of its most highly developed

<sup>1</sup> An exhaustive study of the Philosophy and Psychology of Prayer will be found in *Das Gebet*, by Prof. F. Heiler, of Marburg, 1921.



forms. Psychologically we cannot draw any hard and fast distinction between these forms. Whether the prayer be a confident approach to a personal deity of whose goodwill the worshipper is assured, or a fearful cringing before some mysterious mana-charged object, the attitude is fundamentally the same, and is dictated by identical needs. In both cases it looks back, as it were, to man's native sense of dependence on powers outside him and his sensible world. In this sense prayer is the expression of a nature which must so express itself, and witnesses in the clearest fashion to the religious functioning of the primitive instincts of the race.

For the origin of prayer, therefore, we must look to the action of these instincts in their most rudimentary form. We may agree that prayer is an expression of the religious consciousness. Its beginnings take us back to that pre-animistic stage of religion where the dividing line between religion and magic is hardly to be discerned. As we have already seen magic is not to be regarded as the cause of religion, nor religion as the outcome of the failure of magic (Frazer), but both alike should be conceived as the result of the operation of man's deepest and most powerful social instincts. To the primitive mind the whole world appears charged with forces that work on man for good or ill. Everything has its mana, and man himself needs mana to help him in securing the few necessities of his life or guarding against his enemies. So he makes very little distinction between the agent and the instrument. His hand, e. g., throws the spear but the spear kills. There is therefore a killing quality in it and some spears have more of this than others. So it is but a short step to asking the spear to kill, or to praying to the God of battles to bless the weapons of an army about to go into the fight. That there is some causal connexion between spell and prayer, magic and religion, we need not hesitate to affirm, but it is

indirect rather than direct. It is not so much that spell develops into prayer, as Dr. Marett tentatively suggests, as that both spell and prayer have a common psychological root in the primitive instincts. This may account for the fact that the connexion between the two is not confined to the earliest stages of religious development. In many highly-organized religions prayer tends to take to itself the nature of spell. Wherever set forms of prayer are used a certain sanctity comes to be attached to them, and the very words are regarded as possessing mana or magical power. The Lord's Prayer said backwards is still held to be a powerful charm against evil in certain parts of this country, and the use of the paternoster as a charm in Roman Catholic lands is very common. As Professor Pratt says :

'The earliest human records legible, the Pyramid Texts of Egypt, contain many a prayer quoted from a period far more ancient even than they, and used in the texts as a magical formula. The whole history of prayer in early India, from the Vedic to the Brahmanic period, is another illustration of this tendency, the spontaneous prayers of the early Rishis becoming hallowed and crystallized into magical formulas by which the Gods themselves could be coerced. This tendency in fact is by no means limited to Egypt and India, but is to be found in almost every religion.' 'Hence the magic nature of the prayer-wheel for the Tibetan, of the Sanskrit prayer to the illiterate Hindu, of the Pali prayer to the Chinese Buddhist, and of the Latin Pater Noster to the European peasant. When the ritualistic prayer comes thus to be considered as possessing power in itself, regardless of the mental state of him who says it, it ceases of course to be a prayer at all and becomes exactly a magic spell.'<sup>1</sup>

It appears fairly obvious, then, that even in its earliest forms, prayer involves two definite assumptions, (1) that of the existence of powers or spirits in things, capable of aiding or harming human beings ; (2) that of the approach-

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, pp. 313, 314.

ability of these powers, and of the desirability of approaching them in the right way, in order to secure their favour or avert the mischief of which they are capable or direct it on to others. It is also sometimes argued that this carries with it the belief that these powers are personal. This, however, does not follow necessarily. There is in the primitive mind a strong tendency to personalize inanimate objects just as there is among children. But this tendency itself is due to the belief that there is more in these objects than meets the eye, and appeal may be made to the secret force inherent in them, or to the things themselves because they possess power, without the attribution to them of anything we regard as personality. Thus the new moon is invoked by many African tribes with the request to give good hunting, or safe childbirth, or abundant crops, without any notion that it is a person. In such a case the prayer springs from the belief that ordinary intercourse is possible not merely between human beings, but between human beings and things possessing mana. In Africa also prayer is offered to fetishes, ghosts, and charms as well as to Gods, and it is assumed that all alike are able to help or hinder man in the attainment of his desires. The common characteristics here are simply the desire for help, the feeling of dependence and belief in the power of the person or object addressed.

A very interesting example of the persistence of prayer is to be found in Buddhism, a system, which in its earlier forms has no place for a God or Gods. There is, therefore, here no room for prayer in the ordinary sense, and the Buddha himself carefully avoided, and would have his followers avoid, petitioning Gods for favours of any kind. After his death, however, the Buddha came to be adored by his followers and was regarded not only as a perfect personality, but as the embodiment of all truth and right. The supreme desire of his disciples was to walk in his

way and attain to his ideal. To this end they consecrated themselves, and their vows of self-committal addressed to Buddha and responded to by him with 'encouraging assurance' are indistinguishable from prayers. Vows of adoration accompanied by ideal aspirations are regarded as sanctioned by the example of the Master. The issue of this is seen in Mahayana Buddhism, where the practice of prayer is fully recognized.'

'A prayer addressed to a Buddha, an enlightened soul, is meant and destined to awaken in one's own mind or soul (*chitta*) the same *chitta* as the Buddha's own. To worship a deity—which is admitted by Mahayana Buddhism—means, not to adore it as a being external to oneself, but to realize the excellent qualities found in the Deity. Likewise to pray may be understood to mean asking something of a deity, but the truth is that the one who is asked and the one who asks are one in the fundamental nature and, therefore, the prayer is in its ultimate significance a self-inculcation, a self-committal to the moral ideals of Buddhism. Although the Mahayana practice of offering prayer differs much in its appearance from the practice of primitive Buddhism, the final goal and the conception underlying the practice are the same—mental training for the attainment of Buddhahood.'<sup>1</sup>

The whole religion of China is permeated by the spirit of prayer, and in Chinese Buddhism it has an important place. Buddhist monks offer ritual prayers as a matter of course, and the prayer-wheel is a familiar institution in the popular religion. The objects addressed are ancestors, and evil spirits as well as Buddhas.

In the religious system of the Jains there is practically no room for prayer. Their devout ones have attained to a degree of self-mastery which makes them scorn to utter petitions as though they were beggars, and in any case they realize that both petition and intercession would be useless, as everything in man's lot is fixed by Karma. All the misfortunes that come to men are due to

<sup>1</sup> *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. x, p. 168.

sins in a previous state of existence and are therefore not to be averted. Mrs. Stevenson,<sup>1</sup> however, adduces evidence to show that in Jain worship there is a certain element of adoration and confession—the one a salutation of great saints and principles with the object of stirring the worshipper to courage and emulation, the other a kind of penance or austerity which it is hoped will burn up some of the Karma caused by sinning. Here again, then, though to a less degree than in Buddhism, we find some traces of the reference to powers outside for help and guidance which is at the root of all prayer.

Some light is thrown on the place and meaning of prayer in different religions by studying the occasions and circumstances which call it forth. Among peoples of the lower culture, prayer as an appeal for help under the stress of some misfortune, private or racial, is at first occasional and intermittent. In time, however, it becomes regularized and attached to certain occasions, seasons or happenings in order to avert certain dangers or secure certain boons. Among the most primitive peoples the ceremonials connected with birth, marriage, and death contain special prayers in which spirits, good or bad, ancestors, or gods are invoked. The cases where prayers are offered as a part of the daily routine are comparatively rare, though this is said to be common among the Todas of India and the Masai and Nandi peoples in Africa.

In higher forms of religion where ritual is carefully organized and elaborated, prayer forms an invariable element in it, and ranges from the half-articulate call for help and guidance to the most elaborate expression of adoration and devotion, and to that 'Still communion which transcends, The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.' These ritual prayers also present many features in common

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Modern Jainism*, Oxford, 1910.



with more primitive types and illustrate the close connexion that still obtains between spell and prayer, magic and religion. The careful regulation of times and seasons, postures, places, language, and clothing, shows how deeply imbued are men's minds with the idea that prayer depends for its efficacy to some extent on these outward conditions. It is not merely that they affect the mind of the worshipper by way of suggestion. It is as though the gods or spirits were themselves suggestible. We may here be some distance removed from the idea of coercing the powers by magical influence, but such an idea undoubtedly underlies the notion that prayers offered in a certain way will be heard more readily than others. The great pains taken to ensure the due and orderly carrying out of the prayer rites speaks volumes as to the importance attached to them. The same kind of importance attaches also to the persons who are to offer the prayers. While from the earliest times it has been recognized that prayer could be offered by any individual for his own purposes, it has been equally clearly understood that the efficacy of certain public prayers depended on their being offered by the right persons. So there grew up very early in the history of religion a special class of persons (medicine men or priests) who, from their special knowledge of the spirits or gods, were able to pray more intelligently and usefully than others. In some cases every spirit has its own medicine-man, and the needy worshipper will go from one to another till he finds the one able to deal with the spirit whose help he needs. In the case of public prayers, however, it is generally the father, chief, or high priest who alone can pray on behalf of the family or community. The persistence of these ideas is a familiar feature in the development of religion, and even among modern Christians there are many people still who question the propriety and even the efficacy of public prayers unless they are offered by a duly ordained

priest. To this class of ideas also belongs the well-known practice of offering prayers through the medium of some divine intercessor. In the *Rig Veda* even the priests who know the ritual and may be induced to offer prayers for a price, can only, as it were, send them half-way on their journey. They can only approach the highest Gods through Agni, and the prayer to Agni is that he will intercede with Varuna. So the well-known prayer of Assurbanipal to Nebo, comes to Nebo not direct but through an intermediary, and Nebo himself can only carry it to the great assembly of the Gods. The same principle of mediation is seen at work in Christianity when Roman Catholics pray to the Virgin Mary and to the Son for their good offices, and also among Christians generally whose prayers end with the formula, 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Some of the earliest forms of liturgical prayer are to be found in the Babylonian liturgies which, according to Professor Langdon, date back to the Sumerians of the twenty-fourth to the twenty-first centuries B. C., and were in use right up to the last century before our era.<sup>1</sup> Here we have a number of formal prayers in the ancient sacred language, no longer understood by the common people. Many of them are metrical in form, penitential and confessional in tone, and full of fine spiritual feeling and poetic expression. Others again, especially those connected with the ideas of intercession and atonement, are much mixed up with ceremonial magic. Some of them are in the form of acrostics, and it is evident that the use of them in dedication ceremonies is supposed and intended positively to influence the gods and induce their favour. In the later and more literary period

<sup>1</sup> Cf. article on 'Babylonian Prayer' in *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. x, p. 159.

of the Babylonian empire many prose prayers are found on the inscriptions, of which the following is a good example. It is a prayer of Nebuchadnezzar addressed to Marduk :

‘Without thee, O Lord, what were the portion of the king whom thou lovest, whose name thou callest as it seemed good to thee? Thou directest his being and guidest him in a righteous way. I am thine obedient prince, the creation of thine hand. Thou has created me and hast entrusted me with the rulership of all peoples. According to thy kindness, O Lord, with which thou carest for all of them, cause thy majestic rule to be merciful, and fear of thy divinity cause to be in my heart. Grant me what seems good to thee.’

The Babylonian ritual allows full scope for private prayers, especially for those of penitents, as well as for the more public prayers of the priests. On this Professor Langdon writes :

‘Since the ceremonial prayers of private penance were evolved by the Semites directly from the epilogues of the Sumerian liturgies, we should naturally expect that the prayers introduced into the ceremonies of the secret magic cults were modelled upon classic Sumerian incantation rituals. In fact, an Assyrian catalogue of official liturgies and recessional psalms adds also a long list of titles of Sumerian prayers of the “lifting of the hand” to various gods, and a small fragment of another catalogue contains several more. Since these have Sumerian titles they may go back like the liturgies to Sumerian times. It will be seen, however, that *su-il-la* in these catalogues designated a liturgical public prayer. Only at a later period did the term apply to the Semitic prayers of penitents in the magic rituals. The present writer does not believe that the incantation ceremonies as they came into the hands of Semites in the age of Hammurabi, afforded any opportunity for the prayers of the sinner. They were too ritualistic and priest-ridden to permit of such concessions to laymen. Nor had they risen to the necessary conception of sin to produce private prayers as we have seen them in the later cults. When they passed on their rites of atonement to the Semites they had

probably arrived at the stage at which the priest alone adds prayer to the ban and magic ritual.'<sup>1</sup>

Babylonian ritual is further distinguished by the innumerable occasions for prayer and subjects for prayer which it allows and also for the minute directions given for the preparations of the priests before public prayer can be undertaken. As a whole it provides one of the most remarkable instances of the survival of magical ideas and ancient forms along with a highly developed religious sense and expression of religious need. There is no better evidence to be found of a genuinely spiritual force breaking through the crust of tradition and formalism, or bending it to its purpose.

An interesting feature in the ritual of more advanced peoples is the use of the divine name in prayer, and the belief that the right utterance of the name adds potency to the petition. This, no doubt, dates back to the primitive usage in which names generally are regarded as representing the personality, e.g., as when the name of a dead man is supposed to survive him and represent what is left of him. Both spoken and written names were used in primitive magic, and through them persons could easily be influenced or affected. From this it is but a short step to the idea that special importance attaches to the name of a god or spirit, and that he who has or uses such name thereby acquires power over or influence with the God. Probably the very common habit of concealing the name of the deity, or confining the use of it to certain special people, was due to fear lest the indiscriminate or unauthorized use should lead to untoward consequences. 'But it is in Egypt,' writes Dr. Farnell,

'the land of magic, where the idea of the potency of the divine name assumes dimensions that are truly gigantic. In an early metaphysical theory of the origin of things,

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 162.

which in its harmonious self-contradiction reaches quite to the level of Hegelian philosophy, the universe is said to have come into being, and the first God himself effects his own creation by the utterance of his own portentous name. It is said of the great God Ra that "his names are manifold and unknown, even the gods know them not". Naturally, therefore, the goddess Isis was desirous of knowing his real name, and having discovered it by a ruse, she became mistress over him and all gods. In certain Egyptian papyri containing Abraxas prayers, we find the prayer coupled with the reminder that the petitioner knows the divine mystic name; thus equipped the prayer is more than a mere humble entreaty.<sup>1</sup>

We may compare with this the attitude of the Hebrews to the name Yahweh and the many traces of the special sanctity attaching to the divine name in Christianity, e.g. 'The name that is above every name', 'Hallowed be thy name'. 'The power of the name', 'Prayer in the Name', and so on.

It is needless to multiply illustrations from the history of religion of the place which prayer occupies in worship, and of its gradual transference from the region of spell and magic to that of a real spiritual communion with God. Our task now should rather be to use the materials which the comparative study of religions makes available in order the better to understand the psychological conditions which all prayer pre-supposes. To this end, however, we must take into account the whole story, the higher forms of prayer as well as the lower and more primitive. It is indeed an entire mistake to confine our investigation of these religious phenomena to its less developed forms. We can only judge beginnings in relation to the end which they serve and to which they point. The undeserved disrepute into which anthropological religion, so-called, has fallen, has been due to the lavish attention showered on the primitive, and the consequent impression that all religion was to be read

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Religion*, p. 188.



in terms of animism and magic. It needs to be continually repeated that the humble origin of religion is no reproach to it. We do not think the less of it because it arose out of the workings of our primitive instincts, but we know that if we would estimate it aright we must pay the closest attention to its higher manifestations. Now we venture to assert that the high-water mark of prayer is reached in Christianity, and therefore the study of Christian prayer is quite as important and necessary as the study of any other type in history. But here, again, we have to recognize the existence of grades and degrees. Christianity presents us with an ideal, but it is one that is seldom attained. In the prayer life of the average Christian there is an extraordinary tendency to hark back to the beggarly elements of more primitive conceptions. There are constant out-croppings of the magical. Men pray as though by importunity and vain repetitions they could coerce God. Prayers are still made to depend for their validity on the mode and place in which and the persons by whom they are uttered. In prayer it is difficult to draw the line where religion ends and superstition begins. The hardest and highest thing in the world is, for men to approach God in the temper of 'Thy will be done'.

But all this, however daunting and puzzling to the religious teacher, is of the greatest interest and use to the psychologist. It helps us to understand how large is the element of natural religion in Christianity, and how Christianity, therefore, at once builds upon and appeals to that which is distinctively human. In the prayer of Christians at its best we see exemplified exactly those psychological qualities and conditions which make religion natural to man and prayer an essential element in all religion. In other words we are dealing here, not with something strained, forced, and artificial, but with the spontaneous outgrowth of man's elemental needs and

the normal working of his higher consciousness. As Professor James says:

‘We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray, whilst others are given why we should. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we do pray. The reason why we do pray is simply that we cannot help praying.’

This, then, brings us to the first point we have to notice in regard to the psychology of prayer, viz. that it springs ultimately from our relation to the universe around us—a relation which is sometimes one of dependence and sometimes one of antagonism. In the most primitive stages of his consciousness man feels himself to be not altogether at one with his world. He depends upon his surroundings for life and health and all things, but his surroundings are not always friendly. He has to get his bread with the sweat of his brow, and he has much ado to escape the perils that beset his path. It is much the same with the animals, but the difference comes just here, that man adds to his labour prayer. Dimly but surely he realizes that there is something more in the world about him than he can see. Nature shows him a multitude of faces, and the faces mean powers which in his childish way he personalizes. They can and do help or hinder him, and they can be persuaded to do the one or avoid the other, and so he cries to them in his need, even though he may have no language but a cry. Now it is just this instinctive turning to the powers that be for help that is at the root of prayer all through the ages and even to-day. There is a familiar story of a schoolboy who refused to say his prayers in the morning, because, ‘Any fellow can look after himself in the daylight’. He had no objection to praying in the dark, and there he was but exemplifying an universal human trait. Many an individual who has no

religion to speak of will turn to unwonted prayer under stress of some sorrow or pain. So, too, calamity will incline the whole country and all the Churches to pray. In this there is, no doubt, much superstition and ignorance, but it reflects the normal working of our nature. We are dependent beings whether we like it or not, and this is the inevitable form which our dependence takes. As religion grows more conscious and reflective prayer takes loftier and less selfish forms, but it never altogether loses its primitive and purely petitionary flavour. Man knows that he needs help and protection and his very nature impels him to ask. Compare for example the well-known lines :

There is no God, the foolish saith,  
But none, There is no sorrow.  
And nature oft the cry of faith  
In bitter need will borrow.  
Eyes that the preacher could not school,  
By wayside graves are raised.  
And lips cry 'God be pitiful',  
That ne'er said 'God be praised'.

Further, the much debated question as to the answers to petitionary prayer does not strictly concern us here, though the psychologist must always be interested in the widespread belief in such answers. Those with whom prayer is a habit entertain no doubt that their prayers even for material blessings are directly answered, and the mass of evidence adduced is certainly impressive. While it is not necessary to accept all that is sometimes claimed for prayer, we can hardly refuse to believe that it does produce certain effects which would not otherwise take place. If prayer is a pure delusion then the whole of religion is a delusion, and we have to accept the fact that we are perpetually self-deceived and are living in a kind of crazy world. As James says :

'The genuineness of religion is indissolubly bound up with the question whether the prayerful consciousness be

or be not deceitful. The conviction that something is genuinely transacted in this consciousness is the very core of living religion. As to what is transacted great differences of opinion have prevailed. The unseen powers have been supposed, and are yet supposed, to do what no enlightened man can nowadays believe in. It may well prove that the sphere of influence in prayer is subjective exclusively and that what is immediately changed is only the mind of the praying person. But however our opinion of prayer effects may come to be limited by criticism, religion in the vital sense must stand or fall by the persuasion that effects of some sort genuinely do occur. Through prayer, religion insists, things which cannot be realized in any other manner come about: energy which but for prayer would be bound is by prayer set free and operates in some part be it objective or subjective of the world of experienced phenomena or facts.’<sup>1</sup>

Now we should no doubt all agree, as has been said, that ‘whoso rises from his knees a better man, his prayer is answered’; but we cannot accept this as the whole story. It is true that ‘More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of,’ and the wise man will at least keep an open mind as to the objective results of praying. He knows that much depends on asking for the right things in the right spirit, and that in no case can he hope to impose his will on the divine. But short of that he will surely agree with Dean Inge when he says:

‘The suggestion that in prayer we only hear the echo of our own voices is ridiculous to any one who has prayed. The religious experience claims to be a direct experience of ultimate spiritual reality, in exactly the same way in which our eyes tell us that this chapel is enclosed by walls which do not exist only in our imagination. If a man chooses to be a solipsist or a subjective idealist, I do not know that we can dislodge him from his theoretical position. But most of us are content to believe our bodily eyes, and *a fortiori* we should be content to accept the evidence of the eye of the soul.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 466.

<sup>2</sup> *Speculum Animae*, p. 111. Cf. also Professor Eucken, ‘If we never, as a matter of fact, get beyond merely subjective psychological processes,

Further, in all the higher religions and notably in Christianity prayer takes the form not merely of petition but of communion with the God or Gods. Man's conscious relation with the universe is not exhausted by the world in which he lives. There is an unseen world of the spirit, peopled by unseen powers, and to this also he has his attachments. It becomes necessary to his welfare that he should have speech with these powers and maintain intercourse with them much as he does with his fellow-men. So his prayers are directed to this end and contain in addition to the expression of his needs, confession of sin, praises and intimate converse with the divine. This is the natural outcome of a religious consciousness to which the spiritual world is as great a reality as the material. Just as the natural man needs the society of his kind for his full development, so the spiritual man can only live and grow as he enjoys communion with the divine. The large element of praise found in prayers of communion may be taken as an expression of the right relationship which should exist between the worshipper and the object of his worship. There is no doubt also that such acts of communion deeply influence those who make them and produce subjective results of a very practical kind. They contribute not a little to the moral and spiritual development of those concerned. The process by which this is attained is assuredly one of auto-suggestion, but to say this is not, as is often supposed, to eviscerate prayer of all objective spiritual content. It is certainly not necessary to eliminate the idea of the operation of the spirit of God,

and we can nowhere trace within us the action of cosmic forces ; if we in no case experience through them an enlargement, elevation and transformation of our nature ; then not all the endeavours of its well-meaning friends can preserve religion from sinking to the level of a mere illusion. Without a universal and real principle, without hyperempirical processes, there can be no permanence for religion.' *Der Kampf einen geistigen Lebensinhalt*, p. 319.



because we find in auto-suggestion the mode in which, or the channel through which His spirit works. It is now universally recognized that God can reveal Himself to men in the operation of the ordinary physical laws of nature, quite apart from what used to be called supernatural interference. And the same may be true of the ordinary working of our mental processes. If auto-suggestion can do in the physical sphere all that is claimed for it by Coué and the new Nancy School of Psychotherapy, then there is no reason why it should not be an equally powerful factor in the moral and spiritual sphere. In any case it is only a means whereby healing influences are brought into play whether for the body or for the soul. If, too, on the physical side, the power of auto-suggestion is greatly increased by hetero-suggestion, as seems to be the case, so the spiritual effect of prayer will be found to depend on faith in the Deity to whom it is addressed. It is in the consciousness of dependence on a power outside oneself and greater than oneself that the subjective efficacy of prayer really depends. As Mr. Thouless says :

‘Auto-suggestion is connected with a particular aspect of prayer—its subjective effect on the person praying. With one exception (to be noted later) prayer is not an activity undertaken merely for the sake of its effects on the mind or character of the subject, but primarily for the purpose of coming into communion with, or otherwise affecting the Being to whom prayer is addressed. Its subjective effects, although they may be important, are generally only incidental from the point of view of the power praying. It is these subjective effects, however, which come within the presence of a psychological study: and, regarded as a producer of subjective effects prayer is clearly of the nature of reflective auto-suggestion undertaken with the intention of bringing about changes in that sum of mental dispositions which we call character. Even regarded merely as auto-suggestion, it is probable that prayer must always be more effective than auto-suggestion deliberately and self-consciously carried out. For precisely that

element which was seen to be most essential and most difficult to attain in reflective auto-suggestion—the abandonment of voluntary effort—is provided naturally by the mental attitude of prayer.’<sup>1</sup>

These considerations are sometimes thought to be discounted by the contention that psychology does not justify us in regarding prayer as anything but the projection of our desires and aims on something outside of and above ourselves. It is admitted that such a process is natural as a survival from our infantile condition of dependence on the bounty of others—a dependence which we easily transfer from the physical to the spiritual sphere. This may be all perfectly true as a description of the mental processes involved in praying, but it neither reduces prayer to subjective auto-suggestion on the one hand nor does it laugh it out of court on the other. What is known as projection is undoubtedly one of the means by which we maintain relations with the world around us. It is a mental trait active in all our awareness of material things as well as in all works of imagination. It is one of the avenues of knowledge, and there is no justification for the view that it reduces religion to mere fantasy. As to the argument that prayer is an infantile survival and therefore an unworthy exercise for our maturer powers, it surely proves too much. The man who accepts such an argument must never play any games nor must he ever enter into relations with others which would conflict with his entire independence and self-sufficiency. The truth is that we are dependent creatures all the time and cannot live by and unto ourselves in utter isolation from our fellows. The forms which our dependence takes will change with the stages of our development, but the fact of the dependence remains. That this should find expression in our religious consciousness, especially when it becomes articulate in

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, p. 171.

prayer, is but one more indication that religion is natural to man. When we find, as we do, that among men and women of mature powers prayer is a means of intellectual, moral, and spiritual reinforcement, we shall not be disturbed by the charge of infantilism. On the other hand there is a profound truth in the words, 'Except ye become as little children ye cannot see the Kingdom of God.'

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

Greiff, *Das Gebet im Alten Testament*, Münster, 1915.

Goltz, *Das Gebet in der ältesten Christenheit*, Leipzig, 1901.

Streeter and Dougall, *Concerning Prayer*, London, 1918.

Pfender, *De la prière juive à la prière chrétienne*, Geneva, 1905.

## XII

### SIN AND REPENTANCE

THE consciousness of sin has played a great part in the evolution of religious experience. It has also been itself subject to development. In the earlier stages of religion sin is mainly external and is predicated of acts which contravene custom, law, or tabu. The sense of sin in such cases has, no doubt, to be generally identified with fear of consequences or penalties. When law or custom is equated with the will of a God or Gods, then sin attains the deeper meaning of an offence against the divine. The story of this development is a long and intricate one, but the comparison of the ideas and practices of the various religions of the world shows in a very remarkable way, not, as is sometimes contended, the universality of the sense of sin, but the universality of those instincts, impulses, and prohibitions, which under all kinds of circumstances and conditions issue in a sense of sin. In the earlier stages of every religion there are vast numbers of social and sanitary regulations closely affecting the welfare of the community, and these are supported by sanctions and penalties of the severest kind. They constitute the raw material both of morality and religion. The sense of sin in which they issue may be regarded as the connecting link between the two. The psychological root of it is that in man which makes him willing to submit to restrictions on his instinc-

tive nature for certain ends. A few examples will suffice. Among early Semitic peoples sin is very little more than the violation of ordinances regulating social, religious, and civil life. It is a breach of good custom, though as such it is that of which God or the Gods disapprove. Thus the idea of sin is here always objective, it is an action contrary to the will of God and the well-being of men, and is sinful whether the perpetrator is conscious of it or not. The punishment of individuals or families for unwitting offences, e.g. Uzzah and Achan in Israel and Antigone and Oedipus among the Greeks, points to a time when sin is regarded as a purely external and even physical or material thing, a taint which needs to be wiped out. With the prophets and later history sin becomes less external and more ethical and spiritual ; the conception of it heightens and deepens *pari passu* with the conception of God. Among the Greeks there is a very clear distinction between man-made laws and ordinances and those 'unwritten laws' which are the work of the Gods and are of universal validity. In the religion of the Vedas there is an external view of sin as equivalent to pollution and removable by the proper ritual means, side by side with a somewhat higher view according to which sin is an offence against the God, the omniscient Varuna, and expiable by confession and supplication as well as by the proper offerings. In Japanese religion sin includes the ideas of uncleanness, evil deeds, and calamity, and there is no clear distinction between ritual and moral offences until the introduction of Buddhism into Japan. In Buddhism, however, there is no such thing as sin in the ordinary sense of the word. Everything is covered by Karma or cosmic law from which there is no escape and which allows of no forgiveness. Infractions of the moral law or Dhamma are the result of folly based on ignorance.

If, then, we interpret the consciousness of sin in the broadest possible way we may conclude that the history of



religion justifies us in regarding it as universal. It springs from our common nature and it carries with it always an awareness of freedom to follow what is regarded as a lower line of action when a higher is possible to us. The distinction between lower and higher is due to various causes, chief among them being certain impositions of law, custom, or tabu. In the first instance, then, sin is a matter of the will and finds its raw material in certain conative impulses and appetites of our nature, which are not in themselves sinful, and have by themselves no ethical valuation. They are morally neutral. Most of them are necessary to health, and to the perpetuation of the race, and may be made either instruments of virtue or incentives to vice. They are the primary elements at the basis of morality, but moral value attaches not to them but to the use made of them by the will. By the constitution of his nature man is rational and volitional as well as instinctive and appetitive. He can exercise some choice among his appetites and regulate them by reason for conscious ends. Here he differs from the animals whose natures are mainly instinctive and appetitive and who do not therefore 'lie awake at night and weep over their sins'. At the same time he has an animal nature whose elemental needs prompt his will to action in certain directions. But the will is also subject to other promptings from reason and conscience. Hence a perpetual division or conflict in which the will is moved to lower or higher ends, in which morality has its rise and through which sin becomes possible. For this conflict, however, man is not blameworthy. There is no sin in the fact of being tempted. Indeed, it is the possibility of being tempted which shows the real greatness of human nature. Apart from it we should be merely unmoral creatures. Sin then only arises when in the presence of an inhibition, or of an impulse to some higher end, we yield to the call of the lower nature. It is with the capacity to choose

between ends and the actions leading to them that the possibility of sin emerges.<sup>1</sup>

From the point of view of psychology, however, the question is not so simple as this analysis would seem to indicate. Without in any way taking up a deterministic attitude we have to recognize that human behaviour is far more exclusively instinctive than is often admitted. We cannot regard the will as some mysterious and incomprehensible power of whose capricious action no account whatever can be given. Nor, on the other hand, can we regard ourselves as mere automata without either responsibility or initiative of our own. It is obvious, therefore, that a psychology of volition must underlie any attempt to formulate the psychology of sin. Here the province of psychology is strictly limited. It is not concerned with the moral implications of theories which deny or affirm the freedom of the will. The psychological problem has to do simply with the conflict of motives and the action consequent thereon. Many psychologists, following Professor James, divide motives into weaker or stronger according as they spring from ideals or instincts. Those which arise out of our primitive instincts are regarded as the more imperious and therefore the stronger, and those derived from reason or conscience as the weaker. Here it may be urged in passing that this characterization is by no means universally true. It may represent the average perhaps, as

<sup>1</sup> On the important distinction between sin and moral disease Dr. Hadfield writes as follows: 'Sin is due to *wrong sentiments*, moral disease is due to *morbid complexes* giving rise to uncontrollable impulses. The full and efficient cause of a sin is a deliberate and conscious choice of the will moved by a "false" or wrong ideal. The sinner and the morally diseased both see the ideal: but whereas the former does not, the latter cannot, under ordinary conditions, respond to it. As their conditions are different so must their treatment be, that of the sinner being the persistent presentation of a higher ideal, whilst that of the morally diseased is adequate treatment by psychotherapy' (*Psychology and Morals*, p. 48).

it certainly does the primitive, but there is no doubt that, as education advances, the power of the rational and moral in human nature increases and may easily be normally greater in many temperaments than the power of the instinctive and animal. Be this as it may, however, there is no question that the conflict involved is real, and that the victory of one set of motives over another is due to that exercise of energy on the side of one of them which we call an act of will or volition. The problem may then be restated, as Professor McDougall puts it, as follows :

‘Is volition only a specially complex case of conation implying some conjunction of conations of these two origins (i.e. instinctive or acquired dispositions) rendered possible by the systematic organization of the innate or acquired dispositions? Or does it involve some motive power, some source of energy, some power of striving of an altogether different order?’<sup>1</sup>

In his further exposition Professor McDougall agrees with James when he asserts that ‘the essential achievement of the will is to attend to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind’. Volition is thus an effort of attention. It works partly through inhibition, for the process of holding one object or idea at the centre of consciousness involves the suppression or inhibition of competing ideas or objects. In any case, the effect of volitional action, when the will in any conflict of ideas is thrown on the side of one of them and against the other, is in some way to ‘add to the energy with which the idea of the one desired end maintains itself in opposition to its rival’. But when all this is said there is in it no answer to the question as to why the will should be thrown on this side or that. Obviously, it is not through mere caprice or chance. Even the stoutest defender of freedom will hardly maintain that the will acts without any sort of reason and that

<sup>1</sup> *Social Psychology*, p. 237.

it is a mere incalculable output of energy. But this, again, is not to say that the action of the will is altogether determined. It is governed by certain antecedent conditions, and it works generally in accordance with the nature of which it is the expression. If we could know all these antecedents, and if the nature concerned were an open book to us, we might be able to predict the course of volition in nine cases out of ten. But experience shows that there is often a tenth case which defies all explanation. Again, if all were known even of the tenth case an explanation might be forthcoming. But no explanation will ever destroy man's consciousness that he is not inevitably necessitated in all his actions but free and able to choose. Professor McDougall, who seems to shrink back equally from libertarianism on the one hand and determinism on the other, gives a possible solution of the problem when he makes volition consist in the action of the personality as a whole, of the man himself, or of that which is regarded by himself and others as the most essential part of himself. In other words, McDougall agrees with Stout when he says, 'What is distinctive of voluntary decision is the intervention of self-consciousness as a co-operating factor,' and he further defines volition 'as the supporting or reinforcing of a desire or conation by the co-operation of an impulse excited within the system of the self-regarding sentiment'.<sup>1</sup> This introduction of the self or personality as the chief element in the volitional process is, of course, no real explanation of it, but makes it all the more difficult to rest in the purely deterministic solution of the problem. It leaves us with something original and with a power of initiative which, whatever its antecedents and conditions, does not do away with the sense of responsibility. Both in regard to moral actions and moral judgements men are

<sup>1</sup> *Social Psychology*, p. 247.

conscious of a certain independence which nothing can take from them. Kipling's lines—

The sins that men do by two and two  
They shall pay for one by one—

represent a sense of individual responsibility from<sup>e</sup> which no one who remains morally sensitive can ever quite escape.

It must be admitted that the question of freedom can never be adequately dealt with on psychological grounds alone. When all allowance has been made for the limitations imposed on men by environment, acquired habits, or inherited qualities, there can be no doubt that they still regard themselves as having a sufficient degree of freedom to be held responsible for their actions. In other words, they are moral agents. They do not regard it as possible or reasonable that their actions should be brought within any scheme of purely physical causation. The consciousness of such measure of freedom is universal, and without it and apart from belief in its reality, human intercourse as it is normally carried on would be impossible. The belief itself rests on experience, and has the same justification, e.g., as our belief in the uniformity of Nature. If we are to resolve freedom into an illusion as the determinists do, then a good many other things will disappear with it. On every ground, therefore, we are justified in regarding ourselves as free to discriminate and select among motives and impulses. This does not mean absolute freedom, but the kind of freedom within limits which is sufficient to constitute us responsible and moral beings.

This has a very important bearing on the question of conscience, and to this we must now turn. It is not necessary to maintain that the moral sense is a distinct faculty or that it is innate. It has certainly had a history, and must be regarded as the outcome of the age-long working of faculties and instincts which we share with the animal



creation. But for all that the power of making judgements of value remains. Whatever its origin we have the faculty of deciding that this is right or that is wrong, and we exercise it freely. In this sense conscience is an activity of the whole personality and involves reason, emotion, and will. 'It stands outside the instinctive life of man, not as something separate, but as an awareness of the success or failure of that life in maintaining its status and its growth.'<sup>1</sup> Recent discussions on the nature of conscience have had the important result of confirming the view of it given above and of bringing out the real agreement that exists between psychologists and moral philosophers in spite of the difference in the standpoint from which they approach the subject. Dr. McDougall, for example, writes as follows :

'I do not maintain that conscience is an emotion, nor that any judgements, propositions, categories, ideas, notions, or concepts, are emotions, or can be analysed into emotion. But I maintain that conscience is identical with the whole moral personality, with moral character ; that moral character is always a very complex mental structure, slowly built up in the individual under the influence of the moral tradition ; that in it the forces which determine both action and judgement are the same fundamental conative forces which, working on a lower plane of organization, determine our ordinary judgements and actions, namely, they are the innate instinctive tendencies which are common to all members of the human species, and which, when they operate in relatively crude and violent fashion, are felt as the primary emotions. That Reason plays a part in guiding the development of moral character I do not wish to deny. Nor do I deny that it has played a great and increasing part in developing and refining the moral tradition, in purifying it from inconsistencies and in rendering it a systematic whole. This moral tradition which has been slowly built up during the course of not less than ten thousand years by the efforts and self-sacrifice of the best men of all times, is the most precious possession of mankind.

<sup>1</sup> Hocking, *Human Nature and its remaking*, p. 99.

Without its influence, no man no matter how strong his Reason nor how amiable his native disposition, can achieve such a level of moral character as could be called even a rudimentary conscience.'<sup>1</sup>

In a footnote to the article from which these words are quoted, Professor McDougall gives Dr. Rashdall's definition of conscience which he regards as entirely acceptable. It is as follows :

'Practically the power of deciding between right and wrong involves many emotional elements, and these are certainly included in what is popularly spoken of as conscience. Conscience or (to speak more scientifically) the moral consciousness (or, I would suggest—still more scientifically—the moral character) may be held to include, not merely the capacity of pronouncing moral judgements, but the whole body of instincts, feelings, emotions, desires which are pre-supposed by and which influence these judgements, as well as those which prompt to the doing of the actions which they prescribe.'<sup>2</sup>

These quotations would seem to dispose of the question 'Is conscience an emotion?', and to give to the moral consciousness a commanding position as the expression of the whole personality. The forming of judgements of value and the realization of responsibility are the natural outcome of our human self-hood. They will surely be affected by varieties of temperament and training, but they are not the work of any one faculty. They enlist all in their service, and better perhaps than any other human traits, serve to express character. The immediacy and certainty of the judgements thus arrived at are in no way affected by the fact that conscience itself is the outcome of a process of development. What matters here, as elsewhere, is the finished product, not the means by which it is brought about. Here, again, we can hardly emphasize too strongly the fact that things are to be judged, not by their beginnings, but by their end. The whole evolutionary

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, vol. xix, no. 2, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Theory of Good and Evil*, i, p. 125.

process is only intelligible in the light of that to which it points. We think no worse of a man because he can be traced back to an amoeba, nor is our moral consciousness in any way discredited, still less rendered unreal, by the fact that it is the result of a long process of development, in which social and physical needs were paramount.

The bearing of all this on the psychology of sin is obvious. We have seen already how the comparative study of religions points to an almost universal consciousness of sin. This is by no means confined to the higher and more ethical types of religion, nor is it exclusively the experience of the sick souls. Investigation has shown that the hyper-conscientiousness which exaggerates the sense of personal guilt and fears the commission of the 'unpardonable sin' is generally due to a wrong type of theological teaching and easily becomes morbid. In the same class are to be found vast numbers of cases which can only be regarded as instances of moral disease. There are many evil habits, persistence in which produces an enfeebled will, a diminished power of resistance, and a lowering of the moral sense. Psychologically, again, it is largely a question of attention. The more constantly we keep an idea in the centre of consciousness the more readily will that idea recur, and in any case of choice or conflict the victory will always be to that side which has received most attention in the past. There is thus created a bias or habitude for which the subject is indeed ultimately responsible, though at the moment of action he may seem to be, and may indeed actually be, altogether swayed by it. The condition is one in which freedom seems to be surrendered, but responsibility remains. In every act there are, according to Professor T. H. Green, the following stages: (1) a perception of an object or end, (2) a thought of it as a possible good, (3) a thought of oneself realizing the good, (4) the dwelling on that thought, (5) the consequent desire

of it, (6) the act itself. Now in the process of converting a thought into a desire and a desire into an act, a very large part is played by the action of the subconscious mind. There we have stored up and incubating all the material out of which character and habit are formed. Every contemplated action is largely determined by the associations and impulses arising out of the subconscious. They serve to fix attention and so to determine action. Though we may not be responsible for the immediate result, we are responsible for the contents of the subconscious, and this fact probably serves to explain the sense of guilt which is ineradicable even in those whom we are accustomed to describe as the victims of evil habits. They know that they are responsible for their habits and so in the long run for the consequences which follow from them. The remorse which is an inevitable accompaniment of the sense of sin is a striking witness to man's consciousness of freedom and responsibility. It is something quite different from the irritated regret and annoyance which follows on an error of judgement or a mistaken action. Remorse is at once a tribute to freedom and the recognition of an ideal, to which we have failed to rise.

But remorse is no end in itself. It is simply that 'godly sorrow which leadeth to repentance', and from it repentance must be carefully distinguished. In the process of recovery from sin both have their part to play, but while remorse looks to the past with no feeling beyond one of vain regret, repentance looks to the future with hope. It is a subjective state brought about by recoil from sin and involving a transference of attention to the idea of escape from it. Here, again, the situation is profoundly affected by the past history of the subject. The strength of the feeling of remorse will largely depend on the subconscious attitude to sin, and repentance in its turn will be hastened or produced by the degree of

remorse experienced. Although, then, repentance leads to action of a very definite kind, it must never be confused with those acts which are undertaken in order to do away with the consequences of sin. In other words, repentance is not penance. The substitution of the latter for the former by certain authorities in the Roman Church was a psychological error which caused a profound moral revolt and so proved one of the inner causes of the Reformation in Europe. In this respect history has often repeated itself.

Closely allied with remorse and repentance as means towards the alleviation of the sense and burden of sin is the practice of confession. This has long been recognized as among the most successful agencies in the removal of the disharmony which sin causes. It is indeed an essential element in true penitence, and necessary in order to put the wrongdoer right with himself, with his fellows, and with society. In all religions which have reached a certain stage of development, room is found for the practice of confession either privately, or through ritual, or publicly, or to a priest. The first instinct of the wrongdoer, no doubt, is to repress the evil thing and keep it if possible below the level of consciousness. Generally, however, this only serves to aggravate the mischief, just as in the body a sore is aggravated by being covered over and smothered. It must be opened and given vent before the healing process can begin. So in the soul the opening up of the trouble is a necessary condition of the cure. The records of psychopathology abound in cases where repression has led to so serious a disturbance both psychical and physical as to cause loss of mental balance, or even serious bodily illness. The psycho-analyst knows that the only possible cure in such cases is a thorough exploration of the diseased tract. The trouble may often be cured merely by bringing it to the light. The practice



of confession is strictly analogous to this and has a very important place in spiritual therapeutics. Where there is a real consciousness of sin and a genuine remorse the burden often becomes too great to be borne alone and in silence. By confession the sore is opened, as it were, the conscience relieved and the burden lifted. That this can happen quite apart from any of the consequences which usually follow from confession as ecclesiastically regulated, e.g. absolution and forgiveness, is generally admitted. Most people can recall childish experiences when a wrong committed irritated like a sore place until a clean breast of it was made. The mere act of making it was enough to relieve the mind and remove the obsession.

The need thus indicated has been widely recognized in the history of religion and met in various ways. Chief among them is the ritual of confession, whether public or private. It is found as an essential element in worship in Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Hebrew ritual. Traces of it, too, remain in religions of a more primitive type so widely separated as the early religions of India and of Mexico and Peru, while the practice of it in the Roman and Anglican churches is familiar to all. In other sections of the Christian Church, also, however strong may be the objection to the organized ritual of confession, the thing itself survives and the need for it is widely recognized. Every minister of religion has perforce at times to be a father confessor and listen to the unburdening of the sick soul, while in the exercise of Church discipline public confession of lapse or wrongdoing is required, and at times even enforced. Experience here has proved the truth of George Eliot's words, 'The purifying influence of public confession springs from the fact that by it the hope in lies is for ever swept away and the soul recovers the noble attitude of simplicity.' Experience shows that in order to do its work well, the act of confession, whether

public or private, must be an entirely spontaneous motion of relief. Anything forced or artificial about it is apt to destroy its efficacy. The more keenly the consciousness of sin is realized the more necessary is some conscious effort for its removal.

Professors Raymond and Janet write as follows :

‘Regular confession might have been instituted by some mental specialists of genius as the best means of treating the victims of obsessions. Where is the man or woman who does not pass through periods of depression and bitterness? Between the extremes of morbid obsession and that state of anxiousness which is fully justified by many of the circumstances of life there are a good many intermediary stages. Confession acts upon all these states of despondency like a healing balm to pacify troubles and quicken dying hopes. The abandonment of confession may easily lead to a condition of anxious unrest.’<sup>1</sup>

An interesting comment on this is the fact that inquiries made among sufferers from religious mania show that these are generally from Protestant churches, and that very few are Roman Catholics. Roman Catholic writers argue from this that Confession is a great safeguard against such religious obsessions, and no doubt they are right, though we are probably not far wrong in assuming that it is in the act of confession and not in their particular use of it that the healing virtue lies.

There has been much discussion over the origin of sin, and this question at any rate is one on which psychology throws light if it does not point the way to a complete solution of it. The doctrine of original sin as propounded by Augustine is not the theological or psychological extravagance it sometimes seems. It sprang out of certain facts and experiences which are unescapable, and it met a very real and clamant need. It has, therefore, a certain psychological justification, and it cannot be

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Thouless, p. 56, from *Les Obsessions et les Neurasthénies*, p. 707.

abandoned without some equivalent for it being found. The conception of a humanity tainted from its origin and bringing with it into the world an ineradicable tendency to evil has often seemed to give the best explanation of certain dark facts of character and heredity. That evil tendencies and dispositions are inherited there can be no doubt, and the description of human nature as a *massa peccatrix*, or *massa perditionis*, can appeal to facts for corroboration. When carried to extremes, however, this position creates more difficulties than it solves. The ecclesiastical deductions from it, e. g. the guilt of infants necessitating baptismal regeneration, and the ideas of predestination and election, are now repudiated by the general moral sense of mankind. At the same time there are certain facts of human nature here that require some explanation, and this explanation psychology must try to give. The first point to be recognized is the fact that original sin does not mean original guilt. Whatever may have been our inheritance from the past, and however great the handicap with which we start, we ourselves cannot be held responsible for it. What is original in us is the possession of the raw material of sinfulness, of certain animal propensities, and of a nature so constituted as to make sin always a possibility. Our animal impulses and appetites are not in themselves sinful. Hunger and sex are morally neutral, but they may become gluttony and lust. The use we make of them is the thing that counts, and that constitutes sin or virtue and makes us responsible. It is because of the fact that he is more than an animal and that his actions are never merely instinctive that man attains moral responsibility. His animal instincts need to be curbed and regulated by reason, or by his higher nature. He is so constituted that he looks not merely to his instincts, and to actions based on them, but to the end which they are supposed to serve. Even though this end

be purely self-regarding, or only the well-being of his tribe or family, it constitutes a reason for regulating appetite, and so forms the first step in the development of a moral consciousness. It ends in the substitution of the highest aims for self-gratification, and in the recognition of a whole scale of moral values. The failure to control the instincts, or the substitution of the animal for the rational impulse, is the beginning of sin. The power to distinguish between the moral worth of the ends among which man is able to choose is the characteristic thing in the moral nature of man, constitutes, in other words, his moral consciousness. Further, as we have seen in another connexion, the reasons which impel a man to yield to the impulses of his lower nature and so to sin are as numerous as they are incalculable. No doubt heredity is among the most common. Just as in the body we do not inherit actual diseases, so much as a nature susceptible to such and such a disease, and so easily conquerable by it whenever infection is met with : in the same way we do not inherit sins so much as a tendency to sin. When the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children's teeth are set on edge, and this may mean for the children a weakened moral sense and power of control on the one hand, or intensified animal passions on the other. The situation thus brought about may be made worse or better by the influences to which we are subjected in youth. Education and example can do a great deal to correct a bad heredity and are all-important in training men and women in habits of rational self-control. In other words, environment is an all-powerful factor in the case. Part of the educational process will always be the maintenance of the conviction that we are not at the mercy of our past, or responsible for others' sins, but that our responsibility is confined to the kind of use we make of the moral opportunities presented to us. This use will inevitably differ with differing circumstances. The

struggle will be much more severe in some cases than in others, and the victory, therefore, more praiseworthy. It may not be true that 'to know all is to forgive all', but it is quite clear that no absolute and hard and fast standard of judgement is possible, human nature being what it is. Many men are the victims of circumstances over which they have no control and are more sinned against than sinning. Others, again, miss their opportunities and wilfully make shipwreck of the finest prospects. Between such cases there can be no real comparison, and no one standard can be applied to them. The whole problem of moral responsibility is too vast and complicated for any simple solution, but we are at least justified in concluding on psychological grounds that at the root of every sinful act or disposition, lies an ultimate choice of the lower and an inhibition of the higher springs of action. This is made possible by the dual nature of man in which always 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh'.

The question yet remains as to the part played by the sense of sin in affecting the religious life and consciousness. It is certainly all important in bringing about the moralization of religion, though it tends sometimes to reduce religion to mere ethics. The great end of religion is a right relation with God. This will involve moral conduct and a hatred of sin, but is not necessarily brought about by such means. Indeed, a too lively concern about sin may easily become morbid and defeat its own ends. The New Nancy school of psychiatry has taught us, through the so-called Law of reversed effort, that a strong emotional reaction against any particular line of conduct may make the avoidance of such a line of conduct more rather than less difficult. The more we think about it and the more strongly the imagination dwells on the need to escape from it the greater becomes its attraction. A



process of reflective auto-suggestion is set up which keeps the temptation to evil constantly before the mind and so tends to fix attention upon it and increase its power. This may be illustrated by the story of the saint who found the temptations of the desert and the hermit's cell greater than those of city life. The psychological reason for this was that in his cell the mind had nothing to turn it away from thoughts of evil, while in the busy haunts of men there were distractions to call the attention away to other things. So the very dread and horror of sin may increase the strength of the auto-suggestion, and this can only be combated by a reflective auto-suggestion of a more positive kind. This is an old story, but the psychology of sin only emphasizes its truth and relevance. In dealing with conversion we have seen how easily the consciousness of sin may become morbid, and when that happens it contributes little or nothing to the religious development of the subject. It no doubt increases his misery and intensifies his moral struggle, but so long as it is dwelt upon too exclusively it makes him more of a slave to it and diminishes his chances of escape. The only way out lies in turning attention to the more positive and practical aspects of the religious life.

On the other hand, we must recognize the fact that religion does not necessarily involve a high degree of sensitiveness to moral evil or a keen sense of sin. The case of Benvenuto Cellini is often quoted in this connexion, and Sicilian peasants have been known to proceed straight from devout attendance at Mass to robbery and even murder. So, too, among some more extreme Protestant sects, a high degree of religious fervour and devotion is found to be quite compatible with a most un-Christian callousness to suffering and a very low standard of commercial morality. It is one of the problems of religion how to maintain a due balance between a morbid sense of guilt

on the one hand and a non-moral religious emotionalism on the other. Psychology helps here by emphasizing the distinction between sin and moral disease and by enabling us to develop the religious consciousness on normal and healthy lines.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, Oxford, 1907.

Tennant, *Origin and Propagation of Sin*, London, 1906.

Tennant, *The Concept of Sin*, Cambridge, 1912.

Lacey, *Nature, Miracle and Sin*, London, 1916.

Sears, *The Drama of the Spiritual Life*, New York, 1915.

### XIII

## MYSTICISM

AGAIN and again in our study of the subject we have had occasion to refer to that type of religious consciousness which is called mystical. At the risk of some repetition we have now to consider the whole question afresh from the psychological standpoint alone. In popular speech the term mystic generally stands for something irrational, unpractical, and visionary. It represents a state which always seems to border on the pathological and for which the average man has very little use. To the student of religion, however, the term is much more clearly defined, and its connotation is by no means always bad. In its barest form Mysticism stands for that type of religion in which there is an immediate apprehension of and communion with the ultimate reality, or God.<sup>1</sup> Its assurance of the divine rests on vision or intuition rather than on any ratiocinative process, and is for that reason, for those who entertain it, doubly sure. There is, therefore, a certain mystical element in all religion which rests on personal experience. But in its purest form it involves an intense and vivid appreciation of the unseen world, and an absorption of the self into it. This carries with it a special form of consciousness in which the usual object-subject distinction is obliterated and all is resolved into a oneness. This self, thus identified with its object, is capable of a vast range of vision and can become acquainted with ineffable things.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the discussion of Mysticism in *La Religion et la Foi*, by Henri Delacroix, pp. 247 and foll.

For such direct and immediate contact with the unseen due preparation is necessary. Hence the mystic way and the whole religious apparatus of practical mysticism which is bound up with it and will have to be considered in its turn. In studying the question we shall need to distinguish between mysticism proper, and the common mystical tendency in religion generally, between theoretical and practical mysticism, and between the normal and the pathological among the mystics.

Of the general mystical element in all religions we have already spoken in dealing with the religious consciousness. An essential feature of that consciousness, even in its most rudimentary forms, is the sense of an immediate apprehension of the unseen. The widespread belief in Mana, or its equivalent, indicates simply that man considers himself capable of seeing into the hidden nature of things so far as to discover them to be charged with a strange potency in which he thinks that he can share. That this power of vision is a native capacity of man seems to be one ascertained result of the study of primitive religion. In one of her books on mysticism Miss E. Underhill illustrates the mystical sense by the familiar parable of Eyes and No eyes. One man walks through the country and sees nothing but trees and fields, and a muddy road, while to another the same prospect is radiant with wonder and rich in meaning. The one looks out with the unseeing eye of the careless observer, the other with the insight of an artist, a naturalist, or a poet. The difference between them is not merely one of native capacity, it is a difference in the power of vision due largely to training. The one man has been educated so as to use his eyes, the other has never had his eyes opened. The interest of this for psychology is that we have here two mental states which require a good deal of explaining and whose counterparts in religion are very familiar. Of the two men in the parable

there is no doubt that Eyes is in much closer touch with reality, and sees more deeply and truly into things than his companion. Can we say the same of the vision of the Mystic, and, if so, how far is it possible to educate men and women up to this point of insight? That is really the problem presented by mystical religion.

The illustration which Miss Underhill uses gives in very simple terms the contrast between the rational and mystic types of religious consciousness. Kant states the case for the former in its sharpest form when he says:

'The delusion that we can effect something, in view of our justification before God, by means of acts of religious worship, is religious superstition: and the delusion that we can effect something by attempts at a supposed intercourse with God is religious fanaticism. Such a feeling of the immediate presence of the Supreme Being and such a discrimination between this feeling and every other, even moral feeling, would imply a capacity for an intuition which is without any corresponding organ in human nature.' Kant

Over against this we have to put the undoubted fact that:

'There have been religious geniuses in all ages and in all countries who have had experiences of spiritual expansion. They have been made aware of a Realm of Reality on a higher level than that revealed through their senses. They have sometimes felt invaded by the inrush of larger Life: sometimes they have seemed to push a door inward into a larger range of being with vastly heightened energy. The experience is, as we have seen, always one of joy and rapture: in fact it is probably the highest joy a mortal ever feels. But the significant fact is not the sense of expansion, or of freedom, or of joy. It is not something merely subjective. It is that such experiences minister to life, construct personality and conduce to the increased power of the race. Energy to live by actually does come to them from somewhere. The Universe backs the experience.'<sup>1</sup> R. Jones

The problem is not to be solved, as is sometimes sup-

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. xxx.



posed, by the assumption of a special intuitive religious instinct by which man comes into direct touch with reality. There is no such instinct. In religion, as in all man's reactions to the Universe, the whole man is active. Intellect, feeling, and will all have their part to play. It is true that Religions may be differentiated according as they emphasize the Intellectual, the Moral, and the Mystical factors, but none of them operates alone and in entire isolation from the rest. As Windelband says:

*Windelband* { 'Actual Religion, in its complete reality, belongs to all the spheres of life, and yet transcends them all, as something new and sui generis. It is first an interior life—an apprehending, cognizing, feeling, willing, accomplishing. But this accomplishing leads it on to being also an exterior life; an acting out according to their various standards, of such feeling and willing: and an outward expression of that inner life in general, in ritual acts and divine worship. Yet this worship takes it beyond the little circle of the individual, and constitutes the corporate acts of a community, a social external organization with visible institutions. And yet Religion ever claims to be more than the whole series of such empirical facts and doings, it ever transcends mere earthly experience, and it is an intercourse with the inmost nature and foundation of all reality: it is a life in and with God, a metaphysical life. All these elements belong to the complete concept of actual religion'.<sup>1</sup>

It follows, therefore, that while mysticism has a value and function of its own, in that it opens the way to the deepest apprehension of religious truth, it cannot be regarded as in itself exhausting all the possibilities of our religious nature. Indeed, it tends to become one-sided and in its extremer forms presents pathological symptoms which indicate the need there is to balance it by developing the more rational and practical aspects of the religious consciousness.

When we come to examine the phenomena of mystical

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by von Hügel from *Das Heilige*, p. 356.

religion more closely we find that they range from the crudest type of spiritism to the loftiest sense of communion with God. Their distinguishing characteristic is the immediacy of the consciousness involved. Psychologically this means a state of automatism, or unconscious cerebration, representing experiences which range from inspiration to ecstasy. There is no difference in kind between the assurance of God's help and presence which any humble Christian may feel, and the rapturous absorption of the mystic in the All. The mental attitudes and processes in both cases are the same. The essence of the mystic attitude is the withdrawal of attention from the incidents and interests of common life and the fixation of attention on some one object. This is what is generally known as contemplation, a state from which everything in the nature of thought or reflection is excluded. It means seeing, as it were, with the inward eye, a concentration of attention which makes the subject ultra-suggestible and in many cases produces a kind of hypnosis. The literature of mysticism is full of directions for securing this contemplative mood. Here is a passage from the Pseudo Dionysius in the fifth century :

'And thou, dear Timothy, in thy intent practice of the mystical contemplations, leave behind both thy senses and thy intellectual operations and all things known by sense and intellect, and all things which are not and which are, and set thyself, so far as may be, to uniting thyself in unknowing with him who is above all being and knowledge, for by being purely free and absolute, out of self and of all things, thou shalt be led up to the ray of the divine darkness, stripped of all and loosed from all.'

This may be paralleled by the following passage with which Albertus Magnus, the great scholar of the Middle Ages opens his treatise, *De Adhaerendo Deo* :

'When St. John says that God is a Spirit and that He must be worshipped in spirit, he means that the mind must be

cleared of all images. When thou prayest shut thy door, i.e. the door of thy senses. Keep them barred and bolted against all phantasms and images. Nothing pleases God more than a mind free from all occupations and distractions. Such a mind is in a manner transformed into God, for it can think of nothing and love nothing except God: other creatures and itself it only sees in God. He whom I love and desire is above all that is sensible and all that is intelligible: sense and imagination cannot bring us to Him, but only the desire of a pure heart. This brings us into the darkness of the mind whereby we can ascend to the contemplation even of the mystery of the Trinity. Do not think about the world, nor about thy friends, nor about the past, present, or future; but consider thyself to be outside of the world and alone with God, as if thy will were already separated from the body and had no longer any interest in peace or war, or in the state of the world. Leave thy body and fix thy gaze on the uncreated light. Let nothing come between thee and God. The soul in contemplation views the world from afar off, just as, when we proceed to God by the way of abstraction, we deny to Him, first of all, bodily and sensible attributes, then intelligible qualities, and lastly that being which would keep Him among created things.'

Here we have a type of mystical teaching which afterwards sets the model for many other writers. It combines the *via negativa* and the *via contemplativa* in quite a characteristic way. In Indian mysticism this method of concentration becomes almost a fine art. In the Upanishads the Hindu thinker and seeker is urged to oneness with the changeless one, the reality of all that is, the ineffable. He must avoid the danger of intellectualism on the one hand, and mere magic on the other, and set himself steadfastly towards the goal of identification with and absorption in the ultimate. In the popular religion it is taught that the right attitude can be attained by physical means, and elaborate directions are given to novices as to how they may escape the distractions of the senses, and by posture, silence, control of the breathing, &c., secure that fixing of attention which is

necessary to their end.<sup>1</sup> Even Christian mystics do not despise the various psychic and physical means that may be used to bring about the desired psychological condition or state of mind. Fixed contemplation of the divine is not an easy process, and may be helped by the inhibition of distracting thoughts, meditation in silence, and entire passivity of mind. So Miss Caroline Stephens writes :

‘The inward silence and stillness for the sake of which we value and practice outward silence is a very different thing from vacancy. It is rather the quiescence of a perfectly ordered fullness—a leaving behind of hurrying outward thoughts and an entering into the region of central calm. And let us remember that it is a condition to be resolutely sought for, not a merely passive state into which we may lapse at will. In seeking to be still the first step of necessity is to exclude all disturbances and commotion from without ; but this is not all, there are inward disturbances and commotions to be subdued with a strong hand. There is a natural impulse to fly from the presence of God to a multitude of distractions which we must resolutely control if we would taste the blessedness of conscious nearness to Him. I believe it often is the case that the way to achieve this resolute self-control is through thought—through a deliberate act of attention to our own highest conceptions of the nature and will of Him with whom we have to do.’<sup>2</sup>

This is an admirable description of the finer type of mystic contemplation. Psychologically it involves a process of auto-suggestion which may, and often does, in the end become one of self-hypnosis. We can easily see how constant practice in this mental attitude may produce that illumination and sense of assurance of the divine presence which is the work of the mystical state at its highest. It will also, no doubt, in many cases issue in trance and ecstasy.

<sup>1</sup> There is a very exhaustive study of these methods in Dr. J. W. Hauer's *Die Anfänge der Yoga Praxis: Eine Untersuchung über die Wurzeln der Indischen Mystik*, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Pratt from *Light Arising*, p. 65.

Much has been written on the question of the objective validity of these mystic experiences. On the part of the subjects of them there is never any doubt as to the reality of that which they thus see and hear. They trust their intuitions, and they believe that they are thereby brought into direct contact with the divine. They point to the impressive fact of the agreement among them, of the similarity of method and result which distinguishes their mental processes, as evidence for the truth of that which is given in their experiences. They are the experts of religion, and have had their religious faculties so sharpened and quickened that they claim to be able to see those things to which less favoured mortals are blind. They see what they are prepared to see. This is undoubtedly so, but the question as to the truth, or reality, or objective existence, of that spiritual world with which they believe themselves to be brought into contact is one that cannot be settled on psychological grounds. What we are compelled here to take note of is the fact that the content of this spiritual world is determined by the previous history of the mystic concerned. There is no doubt a real similarity among them and a striking degree of certitude, but there are also differences that must not be overlooked and that testify rather strongly to the purely subjective character of their experiences. For example, both the Christian mystic and the Hindu have visions, but the content of the visions is widely different. St. Teresa sees the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ and has blessed converse with them. The Indian is in touch with Brahma, the Sufi finds Allah. Naturally, in every case the vision takes the form for which the subject of it is prepared, and is coloured by his mentality and the teaching he has received. Professor Coe puts the matter in a nutshell when he says :

‘In short, the mystical revelation can be traced down to the former conditions, physiological and psychological, of



the mystic himself. Let not this conclusion be misconstrued, however. The point is not that the mystical revelation has a physiological basis; even if there were a direct intuition of God it would doubtless have law-abiding correlations with brain processes. What discredits the mystic theory is that it accepts as immediate intuition what is palpably an interpretation. His spiritual monism may be true or not: that question does not here concern us. The present contention is simply that the mystic acquires his religious convictions precisely as his non-mystical neighbour does, viz. through tradition and instruction, auto-suggestion grown habitual, and reflective analysis. The mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience: he does not derive them from it.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time mystics claim with great unanimity the possession of what James calls a 'noetic quality' of mind, an individual illumination which gives them a powerful assurance of the reality of their religious experience. This does not mean, as it is often interpreted to mean that their religion is based entirely on feeling. Their religious consciousness carries them into regions where they have an experience which is deeper and fuller than either feeling or knowledge. As Professor Rufus Jones says:

'Such persons feel often as though a Power, not themselves, were working through them: as though without tension or effort, the creation at which they are working was "given" to them or "brought" to them. There are, I repeat, times when in extraordinary ways the dualistic character of ordinary thought is transcended and the soul comes into possession of itself as a whole, when all we have been, or are, or hope to be, becomes real; and not only so but in these deeper reaches of experience some higher Power than ourselves seems to work with us and through us—a larger life continuous with ourselves, seems to environ us. Our own consciousness appears to be only an effective centre in a vast spiritual environment which acts along with us.'<sup>2</sup>

This is, no doubt, a good description of the working of the mystical consciousness. But does it amount to more than

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1908, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. xxiv.

an ascription of the whole experience to feeling? When Schleiermacher reduced religion to a feeling of dependence, and the consciousness of God to a consciousness of that on which or on whom we depend, he was ranging himself so far with the mystics of all time. But neither he nor they can escape from the necessity of justifying their position by epistemological methods. This consciousness of something outside ourselves to which we are related, and in union with which alone we can find satisfaction, may be real enough to us but will never carry conviction to others unless we are able to give reasons for it that can be examined and tested. What seems so to us does not necessarily seem so to others. We may feel that we have perfectly good reasons for believing that what seems so really is, because we are accustomed to trust our faculties. If we are justified in assuming that the world which presents itself to our senses is a real world, we may be equally justified in inferring the reality of that spiritual world with which our religious sense brings us into touch. But all this is ratiocination, not feeling, and only emphasizes the conclusion to which we have been forced again and again, viz. that mere feeling by itself is blind and dumb, and requires an intellectual process before it can become articulate. There is no doubt that mysticism has a real contribution to make to our understanding of the religious consciousness. But it is not by any means the whole story, nor can it claim to give any greater assurance as to the reality of the objects of religious experience than other methods of approach. It is, however, the belief that it can do this that makes mysticism so attractive to many. It seems to give them the right to say 'I know and am persuaded', and to deliver them from dependence on authority, or on the opinions of others. From this assurance they derive a tranquillity and a strength which can come to them in no other way. So far, indeed,

mysticism is justified by its works. But it remains a purely individual experience, and possesses neither authority nor convincing power so far as outsiders are concerned.

But the dangers and difficulties incident to the exclusively mystical approach to religion are best seen when we come to study it in its extremer forms. That there is a mystical element in all religion goes without saying. Wherever the religious consciousness takes the form of a direct communication with the spiritual world there we have a degree of mysticism. It appears, too, in all prayer, and wherever there is a sense of communion with God. Generally speaking, this is normal and healthy, but a point is soon reached where it becomes pathological. Some of the means used to induce the mystic spirit produce conditions which can only be described as hypnotic and even hysterical. They mark the exaggeration of what is otherwise a normal element in religious experience.

We shall be in a better position to understand this and indeed to grasp the real significance of the mystical temper and attitude of mind if we proceed now to examine in some detail what is known as the Mystic Way, i.e. the various methods by which the mystic attitude is induced and strengthened. Most writers on the subject divide the mystic life and practice into three main forms or stages, viz. (1) the *via negativa* or *purgativa*, (2) *via illuminativa*, and (3) the *via unitiva*. Some, like Miss Underhill, add a fourth stage, which she calls the Dark Night of the soul. Such divisions, however, are purely arbitrary and conventional. Though they do not rest on any universal psychological needs they may serve to distinguish the various phases in the mystic experience or at least to supply headings under which these phases may be usefully discussed.

*e. mystic sta*

1. We begin with the negative or purgative stage. This naturally presupposes some kind of experience which suggests the need for purgation, for such is but the first stage in a process which has had a beginning. This beginning is described by many writers on mysticism as the awakening of the soul or self, or as conversion, as that is usually understood. Here, of course, mysticism falls into line with the average religious experience. Miss Underhill, for example, points out that Starbuck's definition of conversion is really more descriptive of what she calls mystical awakening than of conversion in the ordinary revivalistic sense. He describes conversion as 'primarily an unselfing'. In the earliest stages of his life the individual regards himself as the centre of his universe, and is controlled entirely by his instincts. Conversion means 'the larger world consciousness now pressing in on the individual consciousness. Often it breaks in suddenly and becomes a great new revelation. This is the first aspect of conversion: the person emerges from a smaller limited world of existence into a larger world of being. His life becomes swallowed up into a larger whole.'<sup>1</sup> There is nothing specifically religious about such a description as this. It applies to almost any kind of awakening, intellectual or spiritual, and particularly to the phenomenon of adolescent awakening in which, as we have seen, the consciousness of the non ego, or of an outside world is the primary element. There is certainly nothing here peculiar to mysticism. Its beginnings are probably in no way distinguishable from the normal dawn of the religious consciousness. It is often claimed that with mystics the crisis is more sudden and acute than in other cases, but there is no real evidence for this. We certainly cannot claim that every case of sudden conversion is the prelude to a mystical religious

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to Mysticism*, p. 214.

life. Therefore it is probably right to assume that what is really characteristic of mysticism begins with the *via purgativa*. We may agree with the Dean of St. Paul's that :

'The process of divine knowledge consists . . . in calling into activity a faculty which, as Plotinus says, all possess but few use, the gift which the Cambridge Platonists call the seed of the deiform nature in the human soul. At the core of our personality is a spark lighted at the altar of God in heaven—a something too holy ever to consent to evil, an inner light which can illuminate our whole being.'

There then all higher religion begins, and the mystic way is one method among others of keeping this spirit alive and fanning it into a flame of devotion, insight, and communion. Naturally, the first step in this direction is to ward off everything that would quench the spark of the divine life and hinder spiritual progress. Hence, a series of inhibitions and repressions beginning with the simplest forms of denial of the lower self, and ending in extremes of asceticism. Here mystic practice comes into close touch with certain features of primitive religion. The *via negativa* does for the mystic very much what tabus do for the savage. In both cases the religious life is fenced round with prohibitions which very effectively narrow the way that leads to life. The process generally begins with the inhibiting of the more obvious bodily appetites. Fasting and celibacy are, of course, not by any means confined to mystics, though by them they are definitely practised with a view to the clarification of the spiritual vision. It is a fundamental assumption that flesh and spirit are in absolute antagonism, that the one is a clog and hindrance to the other and must be effectively repressed if touch with the spiritual world is to be maintained. As the *Theologia Germanica* says, 'No one can be enlightened unless he be first cleansed or purified and stripped.' Poverty, chastity, obedience, and self-denial are all



aspects of the purgative way, but as they are advocated by the greater mystics they become far more than a merely mechanical self-emptying in order to be filled. There is a positive ethical value in the process of purification that calls for recognition. Says Eckhart :

‘God is Pure Good in Himself, therefore will He dwell nowhere but in a pure soul. There He can pour Himself out : into that He can wholly flow. What is Purity? It is that a man should have turned himself away from all creatures and have set his heart so entirely on the Pure Good that no creature is to him a comfort, that he has no desire for aught creaturely, save so far as he may apprehend therein the Pure Good which is God. And as little as the bright eye can endure aught foreign in it, so little can the pure soul bear anything in it, any stain on it, that comes between it and God. To it all creatures are pure to enjoy : for it enjoyeth all creatures in God and God in all creatures.’

This more positive side of the mystic way is expressed not merely by stripping oneself of all those things and interests which may distract the mind and draw it away from commerce with the unseen, but also by opening up new avenues of neutral discharge through the practice of various kinds of self-mortification. Such mortification becomes necessary because the senses tend to usurp for themselves far too much of our attention. As St. John of the Cross puts it, ‘Until the desires be lulled to sleep by the mortification of sensuality, and sensuality itself be mortified in them, so that it shall be contrary to the spirit no more, the soul cannot go forth in perfect liberty to the fruition of the union with the Beloved.’ Under the influence of this idea many mystics have courted pain and suffering, and have submitted themselves to torture and degradations unspeakable. St. Francis, a great lover of the beautiful, deliberately set himself to make contact with what was ugly and repulsive, delighting in seeing and doing what was so contrary to his natural disposition.

The loathsome penances of St. Catherine of Genoa and of Madame Guyon are well known and were undertaken with the same end in view, viz. complete detachment from the self and the life of the senses, and absorption in the life of the spirit. At its best this means a moral discipline which selects among the desires and seeks to subdue the least worthy in favour of those which make for the religious life. At its worst it becomes a blind asceticism or a Manichæan obsession based on belief in the inherent evil of the sensible world. As usual, the line between the normal and the morbid here is hard to draw but easy to over-pass.

2. The state of purification leads to that of illumination, a condition in which consciousness is sharpened and intensified to such a degree that direct contemplation of the unseen and eternal becomes possible. This is the pith and marrow of mysticism. Blake, for example, describes himself as being 'drunk with intellectual vision', and regarded it as his mission to cleanse the perceptions of men so that they too might see. Such illumination carries with it not only a 'joyous apprehension of the absolute', but also a quickening of the senses such as gives a deeper insight into the things of everyday. As we have seen already, it is thought that by the practice of the presence of God, by prayer, fasting, meditation, and other religious exercises the powers of the soul may be so enhanced that the pure in heart may really see God. That the mystics generally believe in the reality of the vision of God so won there can be no question. But there are undoubtedly cases where we cannot exclude the possibility of psychic hallucination. In such visions the subjective element is always strong. The form they take is largely conditioned by previous experiences. But we may fairly draw a distinction between those visions which seem to have no end beyond themselves, which are sensuous and

even erotic, and those which lead either to thought or action. While it would be going too far to argue that such visions are false in the one case and true in the other, there is perhaps some justification for assuming that the latter have a greater moral and spiritual value. This was surely true in the case of St. Augustine when he wrote :

‘I entered the secret closet of my soul led by Thee : and this I could do because Thou wast my helper. I entered and beheld with the mysterious eye of my soul the light that never changes, above the eye of my soul, above my intelligence. It was not the common light which all flesh can see, nor was it greater yet of the same kind, as if the light of day were to grow brighter and brighter and flood all space. It was not like this but different, altogether different from all such things. . . . He who knoweth the truth knoweth that Light, and who knoweth it knoweth eternity. Love knoweth it.’<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly necessary, with Miss Underhill, to mark off the dark night of the soul as another and separate stage in the Mystic Way. The conditions here present belong to the mystic temperament as such and manifest themselves at every point in the mystic experience. The position is always alternating between hope and fear. Progress in the spiritual life is never uniform but subject to constant set-backs in which the soul is plunged into the darkest despair. In other words, the soul, like the body, is subject to growing pains. Doubts and fears, temptations and a return to the beggarly elements of the flesh, are all characteristic accompaniments of the religious life. In some cases this ‘dark night’ is darker and more prolonged than in others, and the mystic temperament is particularly subject to its invasions, but it is characteristic too of ordinary religious experience, especially when it is deepest. It is the natural result of the disharmony and lack of adaptation between the physical and psychic sides of our nature. The mystic way aims at emancipation, at

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, Bk. vii, chap. 10.

the freedom of the spirit from the bonds of the flesh, and until the process is complete there is bound to be struggle, turmoil, and pain.

3. The issue of it all is the ecstatic vision and the unitive life, when the eye of the soul is opened and it is at rest in the One, the absolute, God. This final stage, like those that have preceded it, has its milder and intenser form. It may mean a condition of childlike trust and dependence, in which the assurance of the presence of God is complete and the soul is at peace with Him and with the world, or it may mean an ecstatic sense of absorption in the divine, often sensual and even erotic in character and generally speaking psychopathic. It covers all degrees of relation with God from union with the will of God on the one hand to spiritual marriage on the other. Of this unitive life generally Miss Underhill says:

'We deal here with the final triumph of the spirit, the flower of mysticism, humanity's top note: the consummation towards which the contemplative life, with its long slow growth and psychic storms, has moved from the first. We look at a small but ever growing group of heroic figures, living at transcendent levels of reality, which we, immersed in the poor life of illusion, cannot attain: breathing an atmosphere whose true quality we cannot even conceive.'<sup>1</sup>

Our information as to this condition is, of course, derived from the mystics themselves, and is sometimes not easily understood because of their tendency to describe it in symbolical terms. For example, the idea of a heavenly or spiritual marriage is sometimes merely a picturesque way of describing a complete union of spirits. But in other cases the metaphor is pressed in detail and the language used is strongly erotic. The danger of this is obvious and presents pitfalls into which many mystical

<sup>1</sup> *Mysticism*, p. 494.

writers fall. The unitive life is also sometimes described in terms of positive deification, as though union with the absolute meant actual identification with the divine. Eckhart, for example, justifies this formally, arguing from the Incarnation that as God became man in Christ, so in Him also we may become God. 'If I am to know God directly', he says, 'I must become completely He and He I; so that this He and this I become and are one I.'<sup>1</sup> That there is nothing arrogant or blasphemous in this claim may be seen from the statement of it by Ruysbroeck, 'Thus the Spirit is caught by a simple rapture to the Trinity and by a threefold rapture to the Unity, and yet never does the creature become God: never is she confounded with Him. The union is brought by love: but the creature sees and feels between God and herself an eternal and invincible distinction.'<sup>2</sup> These are, then, only exaggerated ways of expressing the attainment of that higher consciousness which is the end and aim of the mystic way and life. That it seems to imply a certain loss of personality and a merging of it in the impersonal Absolute is self-evident, yet the defenders of mysticism always claim that this does not involve the loss of anything that is really essential and of value in personality. It is only that the soul attains here a final and overwhelming experience of reality through contact and communion with which it attains its own highest being. It frequently happens, no doubt, that this consciousness of attainment and beatitude reaches a point where the soul becomes intoxicated with its delights and loses itself in an ocean of bliss. As we have seen already, such ecstatic states are found among all the mystics, and by many are considered to be the supreme end of mystic experience. They are a form of hysteria and are no more essential to mystic

<sup>1</sup> *Mystische Schriften*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Hello, Œuvres Choisies*, p. 199.



religion than mysticism itself is essential to religion. Mysticism bears other fruit than this, and must be judged not by its psychological origins, but by the degree of religious assurance which it brings, and by the many and great contributions which it has made to religious life and service.

The chief characteristics of the ecstatic state are intense emotional excitement, loss of normal self-control, insensibility to external impressions, and increased powers of vision and audition. It expresses itself sometimes in complete calm and in a feeling of rapturous communion with the divine, sometimes in violent manifestations of emotion. It may explain the insensibility to suffering shown by martyrs, visions seen in the excitement of battle, and such phenomena as glossolalia and stigmatization. Modern psychotherapy has shown that, given the required emotional conditions, such physical results are quite possible. The question as to whether such states can ever be regarded as normal must be decided by the effects produced. So far as they tend to strengthen character and to increase a man's moral and spiritual powers they may be said to be normal. They are abnormal when they tend to dissociation and hinder the conservation of the highest values.

From the standpoint of psychology alone the interpretation of mystic experience can no doubt be found in suggestion, imitation, association, and education. If there is such a thing as a mystic sense it can only be some special and transcendent combination of emotion, intellect, and will. But there is no real need for any such assumption to account for the facts. When the mystic claims to apprehend reality psychology may well be interested in the claim and in the emotions, visions, and beliefs which it involves. But it can say nothing as to the existence or nature of such reality apart from the conception of it in the mystic's

experience. The psychologist is also justified in pointing to the large measure of agreement among mystics, and to the intensity and authority with which they apprehend spiritual things. He may argue with Professor James for a certain over-belief through which the mystic does come in contact with the higher spiritual world in virtue of his special degree of religious consciousness, and may conclude as James does that, 'we have in the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come, a positive content of religious experience which is literally and objectively true'.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis and unanimity with which the mystics testify to this experience are certainly impressive and point to instincts and intuitions which are not likely to be altogether fallacious. It is a good rule that we should trust our faculties, and the issue in this case certainly seems to show that some deeper explanation of the mystic consciousness is to be found than simply education and auto-suggestion. These may condition but do not create the experiences in question. As Professor Pratt says in an eminently sane summing up of the whole position :

'May it then, perhaps, be that the mystics are the seers of our world, and that whenever they open the eyes of their souls, the Eternal Light pours in ; and that though we blind ones learnedly describe, generalize, and explain their experience by regular psychological laws, which take account only of the psycho-physical organism, still the light is really there and the mystic apprehends it directly, even as he says. This question is not for psychological discussion. But I think one may say at least this much, that, while the psychology of religion must have a free hand, and while it is hopeless to look to it for a proof of anything transcendent, nothing that it can say should prevent the religious man, who wishes to be perfectly loyal to logic and loyal to truth, from seeing

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties*, p. 515.

in his own spiritual experiences the genuine influence of a living God'.<sup>1</sup>

*Note.*—The following are a few among many definitions of Mysticism. Miss Underhill: 'Mysticism is the art of union with reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in greater or less degree: or who aims at and believes in such attainment.' Prof. Rufus Jones: 'Mysticism expresses the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and immediate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage.' St. Francis of Sales: 'Speculative Theology tends to the knowledge of God. Mystical theology to the love of God—mental prayer and mystical theology are neither more or less than the loving intercourse which the soul holds with God, concerning His infinite goodness in uniting and joining Himself to her.' Gerson: 'The subject-matter of mystical theology is an experimental knowledge of God which is the result of the embrace of unitive love.' Joly: 'Every Christian who is in a state of grace loves God and is more or less of a mystic, but the mystic properly so called, is one who is wrapped up in and filled with the love of God.'

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following:

- Delacroix, *Études sur la Mysticisme*, Paris, 1908.
- Pacheu, *Introduction à la Psychologie des Mystiques*, Paris, 1901.
- Joly, *The Psychology of the Saints*, New York, 1913.
- Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, London, 1916.
- Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element in Religion*, 2nd ed., 1923.
- Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik*, Leipzig, 1893.
- Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, London, 1860.

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 458.

## XIV

### THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

THOUGH it is hardly possible to claim the idea of a life after death as an exclusively religious doctrine, yet both the idea itself and the various cults and practices based upon it are so closely bound up with religion that they intimately affect its psychology. Religion carries with it an interpretation of life and one that is inevitably built on a bigger scale than that of time and sense. If, with Höffding, we regard religion as manifesting itself in the 'conservation of values' it follows as a matter of course that these values belong to that which is eternal and unseen, and are therefore worth maintaining. The hope of a life beyond the grave is as native and integral to man's religious consciousness as the idea of God. Indeed, the two are very closely connected. The future life is regarded as a spirit life, and, as we shall see later, its denizens are often held to be divine. The idea that, after death, the spirit of man returns to God who gave it is only an elaboration of the more primitive view. There is, as we shall see, a very impressive unanimity about the desire for a future life among the peoples of the world, both primitive and civilized. If the wish is father to the thought, we have still to reckon with the wish as something to which man's nature almost invariably gives expression. It would indeed appear as though 'he knows he was not made to die', for throughout the ages he has been found dealing with his dead in such a way

as to show that he regards them as only removed to another sphere of existence.

From the point of view of religion it must always be remembered that what is anticipated in the future is not mere survival, but a life of a higher and more desirable kind than that of earth. In the darkest hours of their experience the hopes of men have rested on the enduring nature of that which is best in human personality and on the perpetuation of the ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty. This hope, though not perhaps essential to the maintenance of a high moral standard in this life, has had much to do with maintaining it, as is evidenced by the fact that the moral standard reached here is held to condition the whole of life in the beyond. Apart from these considerations, it is obvious that mere survival is not a thing to be grasped at, and may indeed involve a condition far worse than that of this present world. One of the most interesting features in the problem before us is the process by which man's almost instinctive belief in and desire for survival has become transformed and moralized under the influence of religious ideas.

The evidence for the belief in survival is practically universal. Even in the graves of the Palaeolithic period traces are found of the custom of burying food and weapons with the corpse for his use in the underworld, while the burial practices of the Neolithic period point unmistakably to a universal belief in life after death. Among peoples of the lower culture the rites of the dead show not only a desire for survival rooted in natural feeling, but a fear of the dangers which may be incurred by the living from the activity of the spirits of the departed. The dead are surrounded by all manner of tabus which indicate that they still retain a vitality of a kind. They are buried in such a way as to provide for their comfort, protection, and sustenance, and many funeral customs point to the possi-

Has every custom  
a reasoned idea  
or purpose be-  
hind it.



bility of communion between them and the living. Among some Australian tribes parts of the body are eaten by the survivors in order to ensure this communion, while with others it is the custom to cut the bodies of the living so that a blood covenant is set up between them and the deceased. The careful elaboration of this type of ceremonial witnesses to a very keen desire to maintain good relations with those who have 'gone before'. The primitive practice of partial or entire cremation probably had as its object the freeing or purification of the spirit from the bodily covering. The cairns, cromlechs, barrows, and tumuli which mark early burial-places are all houses for the departed, and are arranged and graded according to their rank and supposed needs. In many cases the object of the burial rites is to prevent the spirit of the dead from 'walking' and so possibly doing mischief to the living. In some of the earliest graves bodies have been found bound hand and foot for this purpose. From all this, however, very little can be gathered as to the state of the dead in the after life. The one universal fact that emerges is a belief in post-existence, and in the soul or spirit as independent of and surviving the body. As Professor McDougall says:

'The burial customs of many peoples afford the best evidence that the disembodied soul is conceived as like in all essential respects to the living whole of soul and body. The widespread custom of killing slaves or wives on the death of a man of some importance is an expression of the belief that the souls of the victims will accompany his soul and will continue to serve it as they served him before death. And the even more widely spread custom of burying or burning with the dead man his most valued possessions, especially weapons and ornaments, is due to the belief that even these things have their shadowy duplicates or ghost-souls, which can be carried away by the departing soul and used by it as the real objects were used by the living man.'<sup>1</sup>

We may conclude, therefore, that among primitive men

<sup>1</sup> *Body and Mind*, p. 2.

the belief in immortality had its origin in animism, i.e. in the conception of a soul or spirit living in but independent of the body and capable of surviving the body after death. This 'soul' was regarded as similar to the body in form and nature, and as having a quasi-material existence of its own. The famous description of it given by Professor Tylor has never been really superseded. He writes:

'It is a thin, unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow: the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates: independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present: capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place; mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting physical power, and especially appearing to men waking or asleep as a phantasm separate from the body of which it bears the likeness: continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body: able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things.'<sup>1</sup>

The persistence of the belief in such a semi-material ghost soul is a most interesting fact. We find it everywhere and even in modern times and among Christian people the popular mind clings to it. It is the origin of ghost-stories innumerable and of many vulgar superstitions. But it has also played a much larger and more seemly role in the history of religions. It is the root out of which have sprung many of the conceptions of personal immortality. This will become clear as we proceed. But we must also not lose sight of the fact that there are not a few theories of eternal life after death that have their origin in moral, spiritual, and theological ideas, and owe little or nothing to primitive animism. As Baron von Hügel says:

'It is the convictions of the reality and the spiritual-

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Culture*, vol. i, p. 429.

ethical character of God, of a spiritual-ethical soul in man, and of this soul's relation to that God—the reality of a spiritual-ethical kind, already within this life before the body's death—that are the root of every sane and spiritual apprehension of Eternal Life. And though these convictions involve logically, and in the long run are developed by the faith in the soul's non-diminished life after the body's death, it is not this faith in survival after death that is the basis of these great convictions, but it was contrariwise, these great convictions that support and postulate that faith'.<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to some of the more specific conceptions of the ancient world we find that among primitive Semitic peoples the burial customs point to belief in the post-existence of the Spirit or soul. Man is composed of body and spirit (*nefesh* or *ruach*) and after death the latter lives on. But some connexion is still maintained, for the soul cannot rest unless the body is duly buried. The spirits of the dead are active for good or evil, and can be raised for the help of the living. They retain the form they bore in life, but have greater powers. Physically, however, they are weak, and live in a dim and shadowy condition. The conception of Sheol as the abode of the dead is derived from the Babylonian Aralu. It is an underworld to which the dead go down as into a prison. There is a fine description of it in the Book of Job:

'Now should I have lain down and been quiet; I should have slept; then had I been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth who built tombs for themselves, or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver; or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together: they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there: and the slave is free from his master.'<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that in the later religion

<sup>1</sup> *Eternal Life*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Job iii. 13-19.

of Israel the belief in the future life rested more on faith in a living God than on any theories as to the nature of man. Indeed, the belief in spirits was banned under the religion of Yahweh as belonging to the popular superstitions which the new faith had superseded. Later on the idea of a future life and of rewards and punishments therein was more attached to the conception of God as ethical and expanded under influences derived from Persia and Greece. The chief point to keep in mind, however, is that the Old Testament psychology, with its clear distinction between flesh and spirit, carries with it the possibility of the independent existence of spirit, and so prepares the way for belief in life after death. Here, as elsewhere, the idea, while not perhaps originating in the religious consciousness, receives confirmation and expansion from religious sources.

Among early Indo-European peoples there is a widespread belief in spirits and in spirit life. Spirit is equated with wind or breath, and while not altogether unsubstantial, is vaporous and shadowy in form. The spirits of the dead continue to live a life like that of earth, and hence need food, clothing, and shelter. The dead are worshipped and their souls have great power for good and evil. They are capable of wandering about, and can possess trees and inanimate objects and obsess living men and women. They are especially active in causing disease. The dead can be consulted as oracles and communicate with the living through the medium of dreams. Possession by spirits for purposes of divination is common in India, Greece, and Italy. In many of these peoples belief in the re-incarnation of the souls of the dead is very common. In Indo-European folk-lore, dogs, wolves, and hares represent such re-embodied spirits. The transmigration of souls is found both in later Brahmanism and Buddhism. The wicked are punished by being re-born in a lower scale

of existence, and the great object of these systems is to assist souls to escape from this cycle and the necessity of re-birth. The orphic system in Greece sees the soul bound in the same kind of circle of necessity and seeks to set it free by various ascetic and redemptive rules. Of orphism Dr. Farnell says that it:

'Familiarized the world with the conception of the divine element in the human, with the sense of kinship between man and God. It quickened this sense by means of a mystic sacrament whereby man's life was transcendently fused with God's. . . . It strongly marked the antagonism between flesh and spirit and preached with insistence the doctrine of purity, a doctrine mainly ritualistic, but containing also the spiritual idea of the purity of the soul from the taint of sin. . . . Finally, its chief aim and scope was other worldliness, its mission was the preaching of salvation, of an eschatology based on the dogmas of posthumous retribution, purgatory, and of a succession of lives through which the soul is tried; and it promised immortal bliss obtainable through purity and the mysterious magic of a sacrament.'<sup>1</sup>

The spirits of the dead have various dwelling places. Sometimes it is the grave where the body lies whence they emerge as ghosts. Sometimes it is an underworld, Hades or Orcus, or among the Teuton's Hell. Sometimes their lot is more blessed, as in Paradise, Elysium, Valhalla or the Yama of the Vedas. That there is a distinction between the lot of good and evil men in the future is quite clearly recognized, but the appointment of a special place of punishment for the latter is a late development. Here again, however, we have to note the primitive belief in the survival of the spirit or ghost element in man, developing under the influence of various ethical and religious ideas into a definite theory of life after death.

In the religion of Egypt the belief in the continuance of life after death is strong. The vital principle in man is the breath (*du*) which corresponds to soul. After death

<sup>1</sup> *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality*, p. 402.



this becomes the *ba* or spirit, sometimes conceived of as being actually made by the funeral rites. Alongside of this is the notion of the *Ka* or genius, the tutelary spirit of a man which accompanied him through life and survived after death. It is an invisible spiritual duplicate of the human body, and protects the man's interests in the nether world. When a man dies he is said to go to his *Ka* or to be with his *Ka*. The life he lives then is a real life, very similar to the present. Kings retain their state, and all men continue in the class or condition they occupied when on earth. All that they needed was placed in or sacrificed on their tombs, and bodies were embalmed that they might remain a perpetual home for the spirit to return to and be at rest. Among the Egyptians generally the future life was taken for granted, and was bound up in different ways with the fate of the body after death. Hence the great care in preserving the body in the hope of giving it everlasting habitations, a hope which seems to have been quickened by, if it did not actually arise from, dislike at the thought of dissolution. This is illustrated by a very interesting prayer to Osiris which is quoted in the *Book of the Dead*. It runs:

'Grant thou that I may enter into the land of everlastingness, according to that which was done for thee whose body never saw corruption. . . . Let life come from the body's death, and let not decay caused by any reptile make an end of me. Homage to thee, O my divine father Osiris, thou hast thy being with thy members. Thou didst not decay, thou didst not become worms, thou didst not diminish, thou didst not become corruption, thou didst not putrefy, thou didst not turn into worms. I shall not decay, I shall not rot, I shall not putrefy, I shall not turn into worms, I shall have my being, I shall have my being, I shall live, I shall live.'

This is only a strong and poignant expression of a longing which finds voice in most of the religions of the ancient

world. It is, as we have seen, generally closely connected with the idea of a soul or spirit which can survive the body, and this again is bound up with the notion of things sacred or divine. In many cases also the lot of those in the future life is held to be good or evil, a scene of punishment or reward, according as their life in the world has been meritorious or otherwise. We can gather from the few examples we have given that the various forms under which these ideas have been expressed are conditioned by the special circumstances of the people in question. With these particular forms we are not concerned, except in so far as they witness to the adaptability of the idea of the future life and its intimate relation to all man's social and religious interests. For our purpose, however, the most important fact of all is the practically universal character of the belief in a life which is not merely that of this present world.

The modern belief in immortality cannot be regarded as merely a survival of these primitive ideas. It has taken to itself a reasoned and articulate form to which the half instinctive longing for survival and the belief in disembodied spirits forms but the normal background.<sup>1</sup> We have not here to do with the validity or otherwise of the various arguments for immortality, nor indeed with the arguments themselves, but only with the mental processes which underlie them and have given them birth. In the history of the idea of a future life we can discern the instinctive processes which have helped to fashion and make it permanent; in the attempts which are made to justify it we see the working of reflective processes which also demand investigation. These are not always or necessarily religious, though the religious element certainly enters into them. The Christian notion that God

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e. g. the man who said, 'I do not believe in ghosts, but I am afraid of them'.

is not the God of the dead but of the living, is as we have seen, found in a more elementary form in other religions, and generally speaking the connexion of eternal life for men with the divine life is familiar enough. In Christianity it is strengthened and sublimated by attachment to the Son of God who brought life and immortality to light through His Gospel. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is held by Christians to be for them the guarantee of their resurrection, and the future life gains meaning and certainty by being regarded as a life in Christ. The conventional and quasi-material representations of heaven and hell which took so strong a hold of the medieval Church and persist in many quarters even to-day, are gradually giving way before the more spiritual and really religious view of the future which alone is justifiably called Christian.

Leaving the religious question for the moment, we find that the real ground for the persistence of the belief in immortality among reflective men is to be found in the working of consciousness. The primitive belief in spirits has its counterpart in civilized and more sophisticated minds in a recoil from the merely mechanical view of life, and a consciousness of the self as spiritual in the sense of being independent and even master of the fleshly and material life. As consciousness develops it becomes more sure of its own reality and of relation with a world that is not that of the senses. In that world of the spirit in which the soul has a vision of God and is conscious of communion with spiritual powers, the trammels of time and sense seem to be thrown off. The soul seems to correspond with a spiritual environment that is not dependent on or confined by this physical life, and man becomes aware that God has 'set eternity in his heart'. That, under certain conditions, the mind works in this way there can be no doubt. Though it is a purely affective process, it has a psychological importance and interest of its own.

The faith involved here is, as Delacroix says, 'the primordial religious fact',<sup>1</sup> and it is faith in the permanence and reality of certain values such as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. It is with these ideal values that consciousness is concerned and faith in immortality depends on belief in their absolute existence. As Dean Inge says:

'These absolute values are supra-temporal. If the soul were in time no value could arise: for time is always hurling its own products into nothingness, and the present is an unexpended point, dividing an unreal past from an unreal future. The soul is not in time; time is rather in the soul. Values are eternal and indestructible. When Plotinus says, "nothing that really is can ever perish", and when Höffding says that "no value can ever perish out of the world", they are saying the same thing. In so far as we can identify ourselves in thought and mind with the absolute values we are sure of our immortality.'<sup>2</sup>

This is, of course, not an argument, but merely an interpretation of experience. It is only as such that it has psychological interest and worth.

A similar position to this is reached by many along the line of the moral consciousness. If this is a moral universe then it seems to them obvious that it must be built on a bigger scale than that of this mortal life. The idea is popularly expressed in the words 'On earth the broken arc, in heaven the perfect round', and has taken shape in many doctrines of re-incarnation, most of which have a moral and juridical basis. This is the case with the Hindu philosophy of Karma, which explains the inequalities, miseries, and injustices of this life as retribution for sins committed in a previous existence, while happiness is to be regarded as a reward for goodness. Man is thus, for ethical reasons, shut in an endless cycle of existences.

Dr. Farquhar says of this:

'It seems clear that the doctrine was first thought out and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his *La Religion et la Foi*.

<sup>2</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, vol. xv, p. 590.

stated with reference to the future, and that it was some little time before reflection led to the further thought, that a man's present circumstances and experience are the recompense of his behaviour in past lives. Then this train of thought carried farther both backward and forward, would inevitably lead to the conclusion that the series of lives can have neither beginning nor end.'<sup>1</sup>

The strength and persistence of this almost instinctive desire of man to satisfy his moral consciousness and to vindicate the moral order of the Universe, is seen, not merely in the many doctrines of future reward and punishment, in heavens, hells, and purgatories, but also in the modern systems of Theosophy which re-affirm the doctrine of re-incarnation and claim to be in touch with various forms of super-physical life. Mrs. Besant, for example, speaks of the 'heaven portion of the mental world' which is 'guarded from all unpleasant intrusions' and is 'filled with discarnate human beings, who work out into mental and moral powers the good experiences they have garnered in their earthly lives'. The great vogue which these ideas have obtained in later years both in this country and in America, and the extraordinary hold which the kindred system of Anthroposophy now has over educated classes in Germany, are probably due to two reasons. On the one hand they mark a genuine recoil from and revolt against the crude materialism of much of our modern civilization, and on the other they are due to the intensification of the desire for knowledge of the future life which was brought about by the losses in the war. In either case we have here further evidence of that deep and ineradicable instinct which tells man of a life beyond the grave.

At the same time we are hardly justified in assuming that apart from the belief in immortality the moral foundations of the Universe would crumble in pieces. Professor Pringle Pattison argues quite rightly in his book on *The*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 137.



*Idea of Immortality*, that the highest ethical conceptions are independent of all considerations of rewards and punishments, and he points to the morality of the Old Testament and of the Stoics as proof of the possibility of a high moral standard apart from any clear belief in a future life. From the point of view of psychology, however, the really significant fact is the tendency to see in the hope of immortality a moral incentive and a means of redressing the many imperfections and injustices of this mortal life. This may not be a valid argument for a future life, but it is an interesting and significant vindication of man's moral consciousness, and of his persistent determination to find a moral interpretation for his own experience on the one hand and for the Universe around him on the other.

In modern times a good deal of stress is laid on the evidence for post existence which is supposed to be derived from psychical research. The widespread interest which the subject arouses is at least additional evidence for that native desire for immortality on which we have seen reason to insist throughout our study of this question. The results of the proceedings of the society for psychical research, carried out as they have been with scientific care and a real desire to avoid both fraud and delusion, must be regarded as really important. While it is hardly possible for a dispassionate observer to conclude that they have proved their whole case, they have, I believe, done enough greatly to strengthen the presumption, on empirical grounds, of a spiritual life independent of the body, and on the negative side they have adduced evidence of a kind which makes a merely mechanistic explanation of the universe impossible. For example, they have proved up to the hilt the case for what is generally known as telepathy, or the communication between minds by other means than the recognized channels of sense. Add to this that their study of hypnotic and post-hypnotic pheno-

mena has revealed a power of mind over matter to which there is apparently no limit, a conclusion which has been confirmed and extended by the modern practice of psychotherapy, and we have again a most remarkable confirmation of what Dr. McDougall calls the animistic interpretation of life. This again cannot be said to amount to a proof of the soul's independence or survival of the body, but it does establish that view of life and the universe on which alone such a survival becomes possible. These researches give an unmistakable confirmation to man's instinctive belief in the spiritual character of life and personality.

We have yet, however, to face the question as to whether there are any really scientific grounds for believing in the possibility of a continued existence of the soul after the death of the body. Can either psychology or physiology help us here? At first sight it would seem as though the facts were all against the possibility of survival. Consciousness seems entirely to depend on the action of the brain and nervous system, and a very slight injury is sufficient to destroy it. If then we are to conclude that the brain produces consciousness there would seem to be no possibility of a conscious survival of death. But how if the opposite is the case, and consciousness makes the brain, or the brain is merely an organ for the transmission of consciousness? There is a good deal of evidence to show that such a conclusion is at least not inadmissible. Dr. McDougall, for example, points out that the soul may be regarded as a psychic entity capable of various forms of psycho-physical interaction, and that it is the ground of the unity of consciousness rather than the bodily organization.<sup>1</sup> This view is supported by the well-known fact that when consciousness has been lost owing to some injury to the brain, it may after a time be restored, through a transference of function to other areas of the cortex. This

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Body and Mind*, p. 365.

would seem to indicate a definite action of consciousness in creating substitutes for the lost or injured mechanism. Bergson, again, regards the brain not as the creator of consciousness but simply as the instrument for its transmission, an instrument by which the mind becomes articulate and carries out its purposes. In the same way Dr. J. A. Hadfield, after describing the evolution of consciousness in the individual and the race, concludes as follows :

'I do not pretend that the evidence I have brought forward amounts to *proof* that the mind survives the destruction of the body. I have merely attempted to show, in the first place, that it is credible and not contradictory to the teaching of science as we know it at the present day ; and secondly, that it is not only not contradictory to science, but that science points to this supremacy and liberation of the mind as the goal towards which nature is working. It is only reasonable to assume that the process which has been at work through the whole biological history will be continued to its logical conclusion.'

<sup>1</sup>

We may therefore reasonably conclude that there is good scientific evidence for the mind's dominance over and independence of the body. The transmission theory of the relation between brain and consciousness does not conflict with any known physiological or psychological facts and explains many of them better than any other hypothesis. There is, therefore, on scientific grounds alone, at least a presumption that the mind may be capable of surviving the dissolution of its bodily organ.

To the religious minded, however, considerations of this kind do not appeal with any very great force. Among Christians at any rate the belief in immortality rests largely on their conception of the character of God. This colours their whole view of life and justifies a wider outlook than one confined to this world of sense. They reason that if God made man in His own image and for Himself, and if He

<sup>1</sup> *Immortality*, ed. by B. H. Streeter, p. 71.

loves His creatures it is not to be supposed that these aims will be ultimately thwarted and that He will leave them to perish. Life being what it is they feel that some means must be found to fulfil its broken ends and to bring to fruition the promise it contains. If there is any justice in the universe it would seem to demand no less than this while love would be unreal and inconceivable without it. Another and larger life is therefore required to give men the opportunities denied to them in this life. It is in this way that faith in God works for many minds and it issues in the presumption of another life in which the wrongs and injustices of this world will be redressed and its broken hopes and unfulfilled aims be perfected. We have here working on a somewhat higher moral and spiritual scale the tendency which we found to be operative in many of the religions of the world.

"Right forever  
on the scaffold"

But the question yet remains as to how far this widespread belief in immortality, whatever and however various its origin, can be regarded as native to man. All that psychology has to do with it is to note it as a fact, to inquire into its genesis and operation and to assign it its place among the characteristics of our human nature. If it is found to be universal and if it forms a necessary part of our mental and psychical make-up, then there is at least a presumption of its truth and objective reality. Man cannot persuade himself that he is living in a world of illusions, and to him 'quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus' is sufficient reason for accepting a thing as at least reasonable and probably true. This tendency again is one of which psychology must take note without accepting any obligation of proof. Now we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in the history of religions we have a very impressive consensus of opinion on this point of life after death. The belief in it is widespread and some of the most universal and familiar religious cults and practices

are based upon it. We need only refer again here to the very wide vogue of ancestor worship. In the more highly developed religions the belief remains, often sublimated into a lofty and spiritual conception of the future life, though not infrequently traces of earlier and cruder ideas still cling to it. On the other hand, it has to be admitted that in modern times and among the more intellectual and educated classes the belief seems to be losing its hold. This is due, partly to the predominance of the scientific view of the universe, partly to the general absorption in material things and the pressure of secular life, and partly to a reaction against the crudely materialist view of the future state current in popular religion. All these factors were in operation before the war and had led to a marked neglect of the subject of the future life. It was often noticed that sermons on heaven and hell, once so common, had entirely ceased. The war brought a change, and for a time turned men's minds strongly in the direction of the future, and provided most interesting object lessons in the process which the whole history of religion illustrates. Whether this will be more than temporary remains to be seen, but there are already signs that interest in the subject is declining. This gives a new importance to the investigations which have been set on foot as to the modern attitude on the subject, and to these we must now turn. Inquiries which have been instituted tend to show that among educated people the belief in a future life is unquestionably losing its hold. The result of questionnaires among the professional classes has revealed the fact that quite a considerable proportion of those consulted have no interest in or desire for a future life. On one of them Dr. Schiller reports, 'on the whole the answers seem distinctly unfavourable to the doctrine that the interest actually taken in the matter of a future life is commensurate with its spiritual importance, or that the question looms as



large on our mental horizon as tradition had assumed'.

On the other hand, Professor Pratt says :

'It may be that my experience is untrustworthy, but certainly it has been my observation that among religious people the hope and belief in a future life are very central to their religion. The results of my questionnaire show the same fact, if they can be trusted to show anything at all. Among 147 respondents 131 believed in a future life as against 16 who were agnostic. Of 57 respondents to a question concerning the growth or decay of the belief, 45 insisted that their faith in immortality was increasing, 7 noticed no change, and 5 found a decrease. I should claim no value for these figures were it not that I believe my respondents to have been fairly representative religious people, and that the tone of their answers is quite in accord with what the figures indicate. The faith in immortality may be less widespread than the belief in a God, though this is doubtful.'<sup>1</sup>

This is no doubt representative of the condition of things in religious circles. Outside such circles the question is regarded with comparative indifference, a result that might be expected from the growing materialization of life and thought at the present time. This, however, does not affect the fact that under the pressure of need the hope of a future life revives. The experience of this during the war was very remarkable and presents material of the utmost interest for psychology. Whatever may be the case with the sophisticated products of modern culture, there is no doubt that to average men and women still life is more and bigger than it seems. Their outlook is not limited to this world. They have the larger hope, and there is at least a reasonable probability that they are not deceived when they say :

Leave now to dogs and apes,  
Man has forever.

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 252.

In addition to the books mentioned in the text reference may be made to the following :

Salmond, *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, Edinburgh, 1895.

James, *Human Immortality*, London, 1898.

Mellone, *The Immortal Hope*, London, 1909.

Eucken, *The Problem of Human Life*, London, 1909.

Simpson, *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, London, 1922.

Leuba, *Belief in God and Immortality*, New York, 1910.

## XV

### RELIGION AND THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY

THE results of any psychological discussion of religion must largely depend on the particular kind of psychology involved. At present psychologists are by no means agreed among themselves as to either the content or the methods of their science. The older exponents of it are inclined to confine their study to mental states alone, and in some cases their investigation into these is almost entirely physiological. Others, again, tend to look exclusively to the behaviour to which mental conditions give rise and are not so much concerned with the conditions themselves. To these one-sided points of view must be added at least a third in the shape of that new Psychology (so-called) which concerns itself chiefly with subconscious mental processes and with the abnormal in behaviour and works by the methods known as psycho-analysis, and suggestion. In our studies so far we have seen that the application of psychology to religion must involve all the processes indicated. We have not confined ourselves to the study of the religious consciousness, important as that is, but we have taken into account religious behaviour as exemplified not only in the conduct of religious individuals, but also in the long and intricate religious history of the races of mankind. We have seen also how in any such scientific inquiry the information to be gained from the abnormal and psychopathic is equally important with that derived from normal religious life and experience. It will

be easily understood, therefore, that the new Psychology bears very closely on the interpretation of religion and of religious experience. It approaches the material from a fresh angle and presents the inquirer with many new considerations of importance. Unfortunately, however, its exponents are not always content to limit their field to that of strictly scientific inquiry. They are apt to reach out to dogmatic conclusions of a philosophical kind which their data scarcely warrant. Now there is no sort of conflict between religion and science—such as used to be assumed—though there is between theology and certain materialistic philosophies supposed to be derived from a scientific view of the universe. So there is no sort of antagonism between religion and psychology, though there may be between certain forms of religion and certain philosophical conclusions based upon psychology. When Freudians claim that their psychology issues in determinism, or when others resolve religious experience into auto-suggestion, they are going beyond their province as psychologists and entering the realm of philosophy. To meet and combat them there is not our business. All we are justified in doing is to inquire whether and how far their psychology of religion justifies such conclusions. For this purpose we must study the application of the New Psychology to religion more closely than we have done hitherto.

First, then, let us be quite clear as to the differentia of the new Psychology. We have mentioned already the stress laid on the unconscious and the abnormal, but we must add to these its definitely experimental method known as psycho-analysis. The inception of this method is due to Professor Sigmund Freud, of Vienna, whose study of neuroses led him to find underlying them certain unfulfilled desires, generally unknown to the patient, and based chiefly on repressed sexuality. Psycho-analysis is the name given to the process by which the hidden depths

of the individual consciousness can be revealed, and the underlying motives and unconscious tendencies which determine action and character can be brought to light. The method by which the search is carried out was at first hypnosis, but this is no longer regarded as necessary except in extreme cases, and the method now generally adopted is that of free association of ideas, by which the analyst works back into the consciousness of his subject. The aim of psycho-analysis is mainly therapeutic and it has been described as a kind of soul surgery by which repressed and morbid states are opened up and relieved. There can be no doubt that in proper hands and carefully used the method may be of the greatest value in treating nervous and hysterical cases. But among its later exponents psycho-analysis has become much more than a therapeutic agency. It is claimed as a new experimental psychology, a science in and by itself. For example, the Zürich pastor Oscar Pfister in his book *Some Applications of Psycho-analysis*, claims that we have here 'an empirical psychology which aims at filling up the huge gaps left by orthodox psychology between the elementary experimental psychology and the highly spiritual psychology of nations, which, however, is diverted from the creative personality, and consequently in this sense is abstract.'<sup>1</sup> He goes on to argue that it is the psychology of the higher mental processes of religion, art, and philosophy. It is a genuine science and necessary in order to gather up the results of the older type of experimental psychology. 'It is an investigation of the soul which endeavours to do justice to the individual development within the subject in its relations to the whole psychic organism.'<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of the soul life must be carried out by various methods, by the study of behaviour, fantasies, daydreams and dreams, by introspection, and the resolving of complexes.

<sup>1</sup> p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> p. 34.



In all or any of these ways the hidden self may be unveiled and repressions relieved.

The first result of this psycho-analysis was the discovery of what Freud calls *libido* or love. This is the urge, passion, or desire which is the spring of all conative action and is mainly sexual in character. It is responsible for everything creative in human life, while its misdirection or repression is responsible for hysterias, neuroses, and the like. Jung lays the same kind of stress on *libido* but widens its scope. With him it is not primarily or exclusively sexual, though sex is one of the chief forms of its manifestation. It is rather what Bergson calls an '*élan vital*', 'the very stuff and reality of our being', an urge or energy which regulates all our aims and actions. In both cases the repression of *libido* is like damming a stream. Thwarted, it will find new channels for itself of an illegitimate and unhealthy kind. This is confirmed from quite another point of view by Professor Shaler, of Harvard, when he says, 'It is hardly too much to say that all the important errors of conduct, all the burdens of men or of societies, are caused by the inadequacies in the association of the primal animal emotions with those mental powers which have been so rapidly developed in mankind.'

Of Freud's theory in general Dr. William Brown says:

'This energy, or *libido*, is not psychical energy: it is physiological energy. He suggests that it may be of a chemical nature: he is interested in all chemical theories of sex, and the spread of chemical stimulants into the nervous system and its reaction to them. Feelings, when repressed, whatever their original character, reach consciousness, if at all in the form of *anxiety*. It is this complicated theory of *libido*, with its ebb and flow, its transferences and transformations, which will have to reckon with the expert criticism of psychologists and moderate psychotherapists in the near future. Not so with psycho-analysis as a *method*. I for one would say that analysis should be carried out as far as possible and as fully as possible. If

this is done conscientiously according to the method of free association, one may eventually get phenomena which correspond to what Freud describes, and what is much more satisfactory, one may get cures.<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, we begin to see the bearing of psycho-analysis on religion. Jung, for example, regards religion as but one expression of the libido, and this in itself is held to account for the part which sexuality plays in primitive cults. So myths, legends, symbols, and ritual all illustrate the fantasies from which they arise and at least serve to show how deeply religion is bound up with man's primitive instincts and outlook upon life. We must, however, candidly recognize the fact that the new psychology is as yet only in an experimental stage. In spite of the somewhat arbitrary findings both of its Freudian and Jungian exponents it does not represent anything like an ascertained system either of diagnosis or of treatment. The analysis of dreams, for example, on which it builds so much is just one of those processes which cannot be reduced to system. The books which have been written on the subject seem to prove this, and nothing else, and the whole method of exploring the subconscious by such means is open to very grave suspicion. Its only justification is in cases of serious physical or mental trouble, and even then it should be carried out only by physicians or analysts of proved competence. What we are concerned with is that this process sooner or later brings both analyst and subject up against religion. In some cases no doubt, it is being made a substitute for religion of the orthodox kind. There are systems of mental healing which promise all that religion can do in the way of self-adjustment, control and peace of mind. They would explain religion away as a subjective method of resolving unhealthy complexes. In other cases analysis often

<sup>1</sup> *Criticisms of present day Psycho-analysis.*

brings out the fact that both mental and physical troubles are caused by the lack of any religion on the one hand or by exaggerated and premature religious emphasis on the other. It helps us to understand the intimate relation in which religion stands to the whole of life, and goes far to establish the fact of its necessity to a sane and balanced personality. Experience so won gives good grounds for the assertion that among all the repressions from which our human nature suffers, the repression of religion may be the most dangerous. Further, while repressed or wrongly directed religion may be the cause of certain neuroses, it is certain that in the curative process religion plays a very important part. It gives just that external assurance and means of support which men and women seem to need and without which life becomes self-centred, aimless, and morbid.

The relation between religion and psycho-therapy is very ancient and very real. Most forms of religion involve some conception of a spirit world and spirit powers which can infect and control matter. Those who have special knowledge of the secrets of religion are credited with powers over the body either for good or evil. So priests become medicine men, and medicine men priests. In the course of their operations they often bring about cures by suggestion more or less accidentally. But the influence of mind over matter to which such cures point is a reality as is also the part which religion plays in enhancing and focussing it. Attempts to systematize these powers have been made, as, for example, by the Emmanuel movement and Christian Science. However ignorant and blundering their methods, these have met with some real success just because they have grasped part at least of a great truth and brought it into the service of religion. Modern psycho-therapy is doing just the same thing in a more scientific way and therefore with better results, though in

so far as it leaves religion out of account it is equally one-sided. The fact remains that the more deeply the human consciousness is explored, the more integral and intimate is the part which religion is found to play in it. Psychological investigation into morbid and abnormal religious conditions has thus a real value for determining the conditions of a healthy development both psychical and physical. Such investigations will not explain religion, still less explain it away, but they will and do throw much-needed light on the relations between the physical and the psychical and the respective parts these may play in building up a sane and normal consciousness.

We turn now to consider more in detail the methods in question, viz. analysis on the one hand and suggestion on the other. Both alike find their sphere of operation in the so-called subconscious mind, or that part of the mental field which is at any given moment not the object of attention, and therefore only dimly perceived or altogether hidden and submerged. What this really means is that of the multitude of impressions and ideas that impinge on our consciousness very few pass away and are utterly forgotten. Probably owing to something in the organization of the brain which is analogous to the neural basis of habit we are able to recall many of these past ideas and experiences by association, while others again recall themselves without any reason of which we have knowledge. Some of these ideas and impressions may be pre-natal and even racial, but they are still capable of emerging into consciousness and affecting our waking life. In order to account for this it is not necessary to presuppose a secondary personality or a dissociated consciousness. Personality and consciousness are one in all cases of normal mentality, but consciousness at any given moment does not cover all the facts. The field of awareness is comparatively narrow but is capable of infinite extension

? old doctrine  
? innate ideas  
now discredited

under the requisite stimulus. Probably at every hour of our lives we are being influenced by experiences and emotions of which we are entirely unaware and of which we do not become aware until some association recalls them from the buried past. Every line of conduct that we adopt is dictated partly by deliberate and conscious motives and partly by others of whose existence we are at the moment unconscious. Sometimes we deliberately conceal from ourselves the true springs of our action and the  
→ resulting insincerity is a fruitful cause of mental and physical trouble. Modern psychologists seem to be agreed that the subconscious greatly influences our dreams. Without accepting the Freudian theory that dreams always represent unconscious wishes, we may admit that the dream world is often peopled by ideas and images which have been deliberately repressed from consciousness. For example, a sensitive boy was once shown a horrible and disgusting picture. In his waking life he succeeded, as we say, in forgetting all about it, but to the end of his days it was apt to recur in his dreams, often to his great distress. It would appear from numberless instances of  
→ the kind that the more we try to suppress unpleasant experiences the more likely are they to come up in our dreams. There is evidence also that our waking life is influenced to a great extent by ideas and motives of whose creation and even existence we are at the time quite unaware.

It is therefore not surprising that psychologists should allow themselves to speak of the subconscious state or region of the mind as being far wider and more comprehensive than consciousness at any given time. Such language, though purely metaphorical, sufficiently describes the fact. We are not, however, justified in characterizing the contents of the subconsciousness as is sometimes done, as either uniformly good or bad. It is not either the home of



all that is spiritual and lofty nor is it a kind of cesspool of iniquity. Whatever it contains, if the phrase may be used, has come through consciousness, and probably the degree in which we are affected thereby is due to the amount of attention we gave to the original impressions and ideas concerned. A man can so fill his mind with evil thoughts as that they will unconsciously affect his whole outlook upon things, but the blame for this rests not with his unconscious but with his conscious mind. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' The importance of this for the development of man's moral and religious consciousness is obvious, but it may easily be overrated, and it is just here that the methods of the new psychology seem open to question. Whatever else we may say of it we can be quite sure that the subconscious activity of the mind belongs mainly to our instinctive nature. We are here in a world where the appetites and impulses of our lower nature hold sway. Now the essentially human thing about us is the power to control these possessed by us, i. e. by our higher or rational selves. Anything which lessens this power or tends to put control into the hands of the merely instinctive part of us is so far dangerous and derogatory to our humanity. When a man becomes the creature of his appetites he so far ceases to be a man in any true sense of the word. In religion, as in all other relations of his life, a man must think and act consciously and under the guidance of his higher self. To relegate religious experience to the dominion of the unconscious as some psychologists do is to derationalize it in a way which deprives it of all real content and value. For religion is not to be regarded simply as an instinct, nor does it belong to the instinctive side of our nature only. It is rather to be classed as a sentiment, i. e. a direction or organization of our instinctive tendencies in response to some specific stimulus or object. The sentiment of religion has as its

*Religion is  
Sentiment*

object that which will secure the conservation of socially recognized values. It includes within its scope some of the strongest instincts and impulses of our nature and organizes them for ends. The process by which this is accomplished is not instinctive or spontaneous but deliberate and rational, and no account of religion can be complete which does not take into consideration the conscious and purposive element in it.

It is important to lay stress on this point in view of the fact that exponents of the New Psychology are apt to explain religion away by emphasizing unduly its subjective effect and value. Psycho-analysis can undoubtedly free the mind from the repressive influences of religious doubt and struggle, while suggestion rightly used can restore sanity and direct religious impulses into healthy channels. But this does not justify an interpretation of religion derived from these psychopathic states alone. When Freud, for example, equates religion with superstition, and explains both as a projection of our subjective sense, he lays himself open to very serious criticism. His own words are :

‘As a matter of fact, I believe that a large proportion of the mythological conception of the world which reaches far into the most modern religions *is nothing but psychology projected into the outer world.* The dim perception (the auto-psychic perception as it were) of psychic factors and relations of the unconscious was taken as a model in the construction of a transcendental reality, which is destined to be changed again by science into *psychology of the unconscious.* It is difficult to express it in other terms: the analogy to paranoia must here come to our aid. We venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the fall of man, of God, of good and evil, of immortality and the like—i.e. to transform *metaphysics* into *metapsychology.* The gap between the paranoiac’s displacement and that of superstition is narrower than appears at first sight. When human beings began to think, they were obviously compelled to explain the outer world in an anthropomor-

phic sense by a multitude of personalities in their image: the accidents which they explained superstitiously were thus actions and expressions of persons.<sup>1</sup>

Now the position which Freud here takes up certainly cannot be justified on psychological grounds alone. To resolve religion into superstition is a quite indefensible value judgement, and means nothing more than that we apply to the religions of the past tests and standards derived from our own more advanced intellectual standpoint. To argue that the spiritual interpretation of the universe is simply a psychological projection, is certainly not to disprove its objective reality. We have as much justification for trusting our psychological faculties as we have for trusting our intellects, and the data of the former are no more exclusively subjective than those of the latter. These questions, as we have repeatedly pointed out, cannot be settled on psychological or even on metapsychological grounds. They are philosophical problems for which psychology supplies certain data, and they must be dealt with from that standpoint and from that alone.

Jung goes even further than Freud in the direction of a negative metaphysic, and roundly denies the existence of God on psychological grounds. To him God is 'a mere psychological function of an irrational nature'. Arguments for the being of God are absurd, for religion is a purely subjective thing, an infantile projection from our consciousness. He writes:

'The book of Job shows us God at work both as creator and destroyer. Who is this God? A thought which humanity in every part of the world and in all ages has brought forth from itself and always again anew in similar forms: a power in the other world to which man gives praise, a power which creates as well as destroys, an idea necessary to life. Since, psychologically understood,

<sup>1</sup> *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, p. 310. The italics are Freud's.

the divinity is nothing else than a projected complex of representation which is accentuated in feeling according to the degree of religiousness of the individual, so God is to be considered as the representative of a certain sum of energy (libido). This energy, therefore, appears projected (metaphysically) because it works from the unconscious outwards, when it is dislodged from there as psycho-analysis shows.’<sup>1</sup>

Professor Tansley puts the same position rather less crudely when he derives religion from the idealizing tendency of the human mind. ‘The ideal’, he says, ‘may be projected upon a God, represented as the will of God, and when it is thus definitely externalized, an added feeling of security is often felt—the treasure is safe in a supernatural sanctuary.’<sup>2</sup> On this point Dr. Brown writes as follows:

‘It is argued by some that belief in God is a “projection” upon the universe of man’s inner feelings. In answer to this I would point out that, while the phenomenon of projection is an undoubted fact which can be verified in certain cases, these cases are all pathological. Also instances of projection in these pathological cases, when we investigate them, are found to be of a pretty definite character. By analysis we can discover how they arose: and in every case we find that they are due to some definitely abnormal process. Hence to generalize and use the pathological conception of projection in dealing with normal psychology is an illegitimate use of the concept. The normal mind is one thing, the abnormal mind is another, and the mere fact that abnormal tendencies may be present in any man, however apparently normal, does not alter that distinction.’<sup>3</sup>

The net result of this type of reasoning is that these psychologists would tie us down to a purely subjective view of religion. It is no more than an outcome of human activity. They confuse God with the idea of God, and make it a projection of man’s hopes, fears, and ideals.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Psychology*, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Practice of Prayer,’ in a pamphlet *Religion and Life*, p. 49.

In other words, God is but a fantasy which has a certain value for man's moral and spiritual development. The worship of God is a form of infantilism, and survives because it meets a certain elementary need and satisfies the sense of dependence which man never altogether loses. So conscience becomes an emotion, and sin is merely moral disease, the result of repressed or unsatisfied instincts, and to be explained in terms of the complex. Now we have here an extraordinary mixture of truth and falsehood, of legitimate and illegitimate reasoning. It is an attempt to explain religion which really explains it away, and the air of scientific assurance with which it is done makes it very convincing to untutored minds. The real question at issue is not merely, How does the human mind work in relation to religion and the idea of God? but, Is there a God, and have religious ideas any objective reality? Now we must reiterate once more that psychology cannot answer questions such as these, and the attempt to dogmatize on them on the basis of psychological data alone is quite abortive. The great defect of the New Psychology, in its more extreme forms, is that it derives its material almost exclusively from morbid and pathological cases. These have, without question, much to teach us, but they are at best exceptional, and must be treated as such. It is impossible to regard the religious extravagances of neurotics as in any sense really representative, and theories of religion derived from a study of such experiences are not likely to be very sound. It is far safer, as well as far more scientific, to derive our materials from the widespread religious experience of mankind in its more elementary as well as more advanced forms. Psychology helps us to understand the way in which this experience works, but the experience itself speaks to the fact that man is by nature religious and that religion belongs to his normal relations to the universe, and is among the



most potent factors making for his social, moral, and spiritual development. Of the truth of religion for himself there can be no question. The objective existence of that spiritual power to which it points is taken for granted. Belief in the existence of God and a spiritual world can be at best but a working hypothesis, but it is an hypothesis which meets the facts of the case and to man's intelligence makes sense of the universe better than any other. It also satisfies some of the deepest needs and cravings of our nature, and has at least that much of psychological justification. We find order and intelligence in the world around us, and we know that neither we nor the world in which we live are altogether insane. If, then, the idea of God is to be described as a projection from our consciousness, and if prayer is a matter of auto-suggestion, that is no reason why we should resolve either into mere illusion. Rather should we welcome the indication given here that the revelation of God comes to men through those same channels, and by means of the same mental processes as those through which he discovers the reality of the world around him. He has exactly the same reason for trusting his faculties in the one case as in the other. The fact that there are many people who deceive themselves by religious fantasies should no more be allowed to disprove to us the reality and objective validity of religion, than the fact that there are people who are colour-blind or insane should be allowed to disturb our general belief in the reality of the world we see around us, or the general trustworthiness of our faculties. As we have often noted, the fact that psychology is bound to take into account is the assurance which religious experience gives to men and women that God is, and that He is in real contact and communion with them. This assurance does not of course amount to evidence or proof, but the fact that it exists and is not

confined to a few abnormal people carries with it *prima facie* reasons for believing that it is not mere illusion. This has been well stated by Professor W. K. Wright as follows :

'Man is placed in a real environment, not an imaginary one. If there were no Being in man's environment, to which the conception of God in some measure corresponded, man would not best succeed in adjusting himself to his environment by belief in God: such a belief would in that case be entirely quixotic in its effects on human conduct. But the opposite is the fact. Therefore there is a God. To be sure our idea of God may not be very adequate. It may be as imperfect as the conceptions which we might imagine that the tiny inhabitants of a pool of water have of us. But every philosophical believer in God is ready to admit that our conceptions of Him are symbolical. The fact that the conception does work in human experience, that it does enable men to conform to the requirements of the world in which they are placed, and to achieve a fuller life is evidence for the contention that the conception is not an illusion, but that however inadequate it may be, it is at least symbolical of ultimate reality.'<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to suggestion, we may describe it as the tendency to accept some idea as one's own simply because it is conveyed to one by another person and without any rational examination of its truth or validity. Man may be described as a suggestible animal, and in everyday life many of the ideas and impressions which govern our actions come to us simply because they are commonly entertained, are 'in the air' so to speak, and influence us apart from any critical examination on our side. There is, no doubt, something to be said for the view that all suggestion is auto-suggestion, if that means merely that suggestions move us only in so far as we accept them and make them ours. Most of the beliefs on which we act in political, social, and even intellectual matters come to us in this way from

<sup>1</sup> *A Student's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 357.

our environment, and without any really intelligent examination or appreciation. The same is true of religious beliefs which sympathy and imitation unconsciously incline us to accept. It goes without saying, therefore, that suggestion has for the mind and also for the body a very definite therapeutic value. Many of our obsessions and neurotic states are due to bad auto-suggestions, and can only be corrected by suggestions of good. There is no doubt that religious ideas work thus in a positive and health-giving way apart from any conscious rational process. One of the most valuable forms of auto-suggestion is that brought about by religious meditation and prayer. But to say this is not to resolve religion into auto-suggestion and to deprive it of all objective validity. We need not hesitate to admit the power of suggestion or to use it for religious purposes, but we cannot escape the conclusion that it finds its sphere of operation in the subconscious and instinctive side of our nature. It needs, therefore, to be supplemented by some rational and reflective process before it can be fully effective. So Dr. William Brown argues that for therapeutic purposes auto-suggestion is really a form of prayer, and is only successful when it has as its emotional basis some form of belief in the general beneficence of things or in other words faith in God. The mere mechanical thinking of a certain result will not bring it about without a feeling of faith in a power outside ourselves helping towards the result desired.

It should be noted in this connexion that psychotherapists like M. Coué, who work entirely by suggestion and auto-suggestion, recognize the great help that may be derived from religious faith, even though they make no direct use of it. We may conclude, therefore, that suggestion, so far from being a substitute for religion, finds in religious ideas and practices a potent aid towards the end which it seeks to attain. This becomes clearer when we

realize that Coué's law of reversed effort, which puts the will and the imagination in conflict and assigns the victory always to the latter, does not cover all the facts of the case. Reflective suggestion does not act independently of the will. With human beings desire or wish is not possible without thinking of the object in view, and willing either to attain it or leave it. So suggestion to be effective really involves an exercise of the will, and is thus something more than a merely automatic process.

As we have frequently had occasion to observe, the province of the psychology of religion is strictly limited. It enables us to study the religious consciousness and to analyse its contents. Through it we learn that the religious psychosis is intimately bound up with the normal working of our nature and an essential element in our reaction to the universe. It does not give us any right to pronounce on the objective validity or ethical valuation of the idea of religion. But it does justify us in arguing as to the reasonableness of man's religious outlook. It is on the normal working of the human consciousness that we rest our belief in the intelligibility and interpretability of the world around us. We do not suffer this belief to be disturbed by the fact that there are abnormal human beings, whose minds do not find in the universe what is found there by the general mind. So in the same way we may accept the trustworthiness of the general findings of the religious consciousness, undisturbed by the fantasies and aberrations of neurotic and hysterical subjects. The ultimate test is the pragmatic one of the workableness of the result arrived at. Our interpretation of the universe must work or we abandon it. So in religion the test of the hypothesis is its power to make for the advancement of the individual and of society. A religion that issues in fantasies of a merely emotional kind may well be under suspicion, but when it tends to the furtherance of life and

x to the clarifying of thought it carries its credentials with it. Psychology at least supplies us with the data for such conclusions as these.

The point is one which needs to be stressed in view of the exaggerated emphasis which the new psychology lays on the role of the subconscious in religion. It is recognized that the subconscious belongs to the instinctive side of our nature. But the fact is that, as we are responsible for the contents of the subconscious mind, so are we for the use of the material which it presents to consciousness. Neither in religion nor in any other sphere of human activity are we content to surrender ourselves to the guidance of the blind instinctive forces of our nature. It is an axiom of psychology that personality is one and that its action is the resultant of a combination of forces in which emotion, intellect, and will all have a part. In all of them again subconscious influences co-operate, but the role they play is a subordinate one save in cases which can only be classed as morbid. The tendency of the new psychology in these matters is to turn the exception into the rule.

Much the same may be said of its attitude to the moral aspects and implications of the religious consciousness. The exclusive attention which it pays to the psychopathic tends to reduce sin to a moral disease, and to whittle away responsibility to vanishing point. The following passage from Dr. Alfred Adler's *Neurotic Constitution* is typical :

‘Consciousness of guilt and conscience are fictitious guiding principles of caution like religiosity and subserve the craving for security. Their object is to prevent a lowering of the ego consciousness when the irritated aggressiveness impels immoderately to selfish deeds. In the consciousness of guilt the glance is directed backwards, conscience operates through foresight. The love of truth, too, is sustained by the craving for security, and belongs really within the



sphere of our personal ideal, while the neurotic lie represents a feeble attempt to preserve appearances and to effect compensation.'

Now this may be a good enough psychological description of the morbid processes which go on within the consciousness of those whose lives are disturbed by an inferiority complex, but it is certainly not either a sufficient account or explanation of conscience or of the sense of guilt and responsibility. It only serves again to illustrate the pitfalls which lie in the path of those who argue from the abnormal to the normal. The province of psychology is here strictly limited. It can describe for us the mental processes which underlie our moral consciousness. It can make out a good case for the diagnosis of moral disease under certain conditions. But to assume that in so doing it resolves conscience into emotion, destroys freedom, and reduces sin to a neurosis is to go far beyond our warrant. We enter here into questions the solution of which lies with philosophy, and for which psychology can only supply useful and indispensable material.

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